

# *The Bible's Missionary Message*

**Part I: The Old Testament**

*Steef van 't Slot, PhD*

**The Bible's Missionary Message,  
Part 1: The Old Testament**

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Part 1: The Old Testament**

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## **Endorsement for 'The Bible's Missionary Message'**

'You must meet my Dutch friend,' exclaimed a Belgian friend of mine about a decade ago. 'He has written and teaches some of the best material I have seen on the Biblical foundations of mission'. A short time later I was introduced to Dr. Steef and a bond formed between us around a shared goal of training missionaries throughout the world. Since then I have had the privilege of teaching with Steef in Africa.

The work he has done in these newly revised volumes is priceless. We affirm that it is mandatory that all who serve cross-culturally have a clear grasp of God's view of mission as revealed in Holy Scripture. This is what these volumes contain. Steef has searched scripture verse by verse and line by line. It is a rich resource for both the beginning student and the academic expert who teaches and writes at the highest levels.

I am particularly thankful for this excellent work. I believe it will be an oft-quoted and useful tool for years to come. So whether you are new to mission study, wanting to understand God's heart for the world or are quite familiar and looking for new discoveries with clear analysis and treatment of the entire sweep of scripture, this is a must for you.

I predict that you will find yourself stopping from time to time just to worship, thanking God for His great love for all ethne.

This love moved the Father to make the ultimate sacrifice – allowing His own Son to die – providing a way that each of us can be forgiven and adopted into His family. May these pages inspire you to become a proclaimer of this 'good news' to those who have not yet heard it, wherever they may be on this planet.

Paul Strand, Senior Professor and Training Consultant  
Bethany International Ministries  
Bloomington, Minnesota USA

## **Endorsement for**

### **‘The Bible’s Missionary Message’**

The Bible’s Missionary Message, Part I - Old Testament, is the revision of Steef van ‘t Slot’s earlier book *Biblical Foundation for World Missions*. The word ‘revision’ expresses a lot about the author. Despite, or may-be due to, his mission experience already for many decades, he persists in his search for even better ways to emphasise the missional value of the whole Bible. He does so from the starting point that the foundation of missions is in the Bible. But, based on this axiom, the author’s desire clearly is to expand the richness of the Bible’s message on missions. He does so by looking for further evidence of missional aspects in the Bible and by looking for ways how to teach even more relevantly about this evidence. Though the author has a PhD himself, he manages to communicate on the level of his target group: Christians who want to be missionaries, but many times lack sufficient education. His experience in working with this target group encourages him to continue searching for relevancy.

The above makes this book, and I am sure also the New Testament parts still to come, a valuable book to study the Bible as ‘mission book’, both theoretically and practically. And not only for the mentioned target group, but also for those who were blessed with better education and want to learn about communicating to Christians from an oral culture.

I sincerely recommend this book as a study book on missions and as an encouragement for those who experience being called by God into the mission fields.

Kees van der Wilden  
Associate Director  
WEA Mission Commission

## Acknowledgments

I want to express my sincere thanks to Mrs. Elizabeth Strand for her perseverance in proof-reading this book and correcting some language errors, in spite of an un-cooperative computer. Without you, my English might have sounded even more foreign to native English speakers!

I also have much appreciation for my friend Anton Kemp, for many years the chairman of our Dutch support team (that later developed into the foundation 'Recruiting for Missions') during our years in Africa. He has been reading the contents of all three volumes in Dutch, and gave many helpful comments regarding understandability of text and footnotes. It was also his idea to publish three volumes instead of two.

Thanks also to my friend Kees van der Wilden, who, apart from writing an endorsement paragraph, also gave much useful advice on how to best shape this manuscript into a book.

## Author's Preface

Most of the contents of this book were originally published (by Hebron Theological College, Rynfield, South Africa, 2005) as a one-volume book, with the title *Biblical Foundation for World Missions*. This book was too voluminous, too costly to produce and too heavy to transport with its 281 pages in A-4 format.

Therefore I re-worked it into 78 short articles, published on our website [www.recruiting4missions.org](http://www.recruiting4missions.org) between April 2008 and September 2014. I now publish these in 3 small volumes, trusting that this makes production, use and transport more tenable.

This first volume contains 28 articles on the Old Testament; volumes two and three will each contain 25 articles on the New Testament. They were designed for modular teaching in Bible schools, theological seminaries and missionary training centers: each of these takes about an hour to teach. Depending on how many teaching hours there are in one school week, each volume can be taught in about a week, but it is an intensive program.

Remember the book's target group: Christians in the Developing World who want to become missionaries. Their level and type of education recommends oral teaching, for which this text is at best a sustaining tool, not one that best stands alone. It can also be used for Bible studies or sermons and during retreat weeks or mission conferences.

May these studies increase your understanding of the Bible's message about world missions. May it also make your journey from first initial awareness to enthusiastic involvement exciting, blessed and successful!

*Steef van 't Slot, Ede, The Netherlands, June 2014*

# Introduction

The best way to learn the Biblical message about world missions is not to read *a* book about it (such as this) but to read *the* Book, more specifically: to read the Bible with missionary eyes. That is how its forerunner was written and it is also the basis for the two following volumes on the New Testament.

Some main themes run through these three volumes. The *first* is the unity between Old and New Testaments: both are the Word of God and speak about the same God. Both are of equal importance: call the Old Testament the picture book and the New Testament the textbook, if you wish. They tell the same story and complement each other. We must not forget that Jesus and the Apostles used the Old Testament as their textbook for teaching; so we cannot dispense of it either.

A *second* principal theme is, that God is the God of the whole world, whose name needs to be preached to the ends of the earth. All people groups in the world need to know that only He is God. There is not a single people group in which He is not interested.

*Another* is, that God, Who could not and would not tolerate sin in Old Testament times does not tolerate it in New Testament times either. He has not changed. He always offered only one way of salvation out of judgment and He still does: today it is faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christianity is unique: there is no other religion where the god comes down to people to save them. Only Jesus Christ did that.

The *last* one is, that if there is only one way of salvation, there are consequences when you do not choose that way. Man has been created as free moral agent; a relationship between man and God is possible only, when man chooses such a relationship voluntarily. Jesus talked a lot about hell as the horrible alternative. He was the only One who knew what He was talking about, and yet we don't like to hear about hell nowadays.

It is about time that we take God, Jesus and the entire contents of the Bible serious again. We have become too liberal and tend to think that all roads lead to Rome, as the expression goes. Let's return to the full Biblical message and hear and obey Jesus' words. He is coming back and then the era of grace will be over. Let's use our time, before night falls.

One way to use this book is to stick to the given order of chapters. To start with the twelve missionary themes in Genesis is advisable, because there are so many foundational issues dealt with in that first book of the Bible. Alternatively, chapter sections can be taught or read in the canonical order of the Bible books.

In any case, for the student who just reads these materials, it is of great importance to do so with an open Bible: look up all Scripture references that are given under the footnotes. That will increase your Bible knowledge significantly. Discussing the study questions at the end of each section will help to improve your understanding and more easily retain the main issues.



# Chapter I

## Twelve Missionary Themes in Genesis

### *Introduction*

We find twelve missionary themes in the book of Genesis. We see that world missions was by no means God's 'afterthought' that only started in Matthew 28 or Acts 2. On the contrary: Genesis, the book of all beginnings, is also the book in which world missions begins.

Like other biblical topics, that of world missions develop according to the hermeneutical principle of progressive revelation: biblical themes unfold as time progresses.

These themes have a direct relationship to world missions. They are major themes in the Scriptures. The entire Bible is a book of world missions. God is the God of 'all nations, generations and peoples'. This is seen in every Bible book.

## *Theme 1: Who Sends? The Missio Dei – Origin of the Missionary Endeavour*

The need for world missions is hard to understand for anyone who has no understanding of who God is: His attributes, character, plans and claims with regard to humanity, and how He reveals Himself in His Word in language, pictures and illustrations.

God introduces Himself in His Trinitarian existence: Verse 1 speaks about ‘God’; verse 2 about the ‘Spirit of God’ and in verse 3 the ‘Light’ appears: Christ in His pre-incarnate state.<sup>1</sup> Then He speaks about ‘us’ and ‘our’, indicating three or more Persons, sharing the same Godly essence of Being, and relational in character.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, mankind was created relationally,<sup>3</sup> reflecting the Trinity by body, soul and spirit – united in one human life. The Godhead is revealed in three Persons, yet is One in Being.<sup>4</sup>

Man was created to live in two worlds. As the *Adam*, he was created ‘from the dust of the ground’ (*‘adamah’ in Hebrew*). Then, God ‘breathed into his nostrils the breath (*‘ruah’ in Hebrew, lit. ‘spirit’*) of life’.<sup>5</sup> Man has been designed to live relationally on earth as well as in heaven: equally equipped to have spiritual communion with God and enjoy fellowship with other people. Human life is not complete if lived on a natural level only; man was created for close contact with God.<sup>6</sup>

But man, created for fellowship with God, sinned and lost it. God provided a way of salvation so that fellowship can be restored. This proclamation of salvation is what world missions is all about: the *Missio Dei*, God’s mission to save a lost human race. Where worldwide human enterprise concentrates on executing the *Missio Dei*, we see *Missiones Ecclesiae*: missions performed by the Church, coming into existence.

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 1:1-3; John 1:1-5; 8:12; 11:25; 14:6; Col. 1:16

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 1:26

<sup>3</sup> 2:20b-23

<sup>4</sup> Deut. 6:4

<sup>5</sup> Gen. 2:7

<sup>6</sup> God envies intensely the spirit he caused to live in us, James 4:5

People appear in the Bible, *sent* by God to perform certain tasks. We also see people, once sent themselves, become *senders* – within God’s purposes.

The *first* sent ones are Adam and Eve: ‘sent’ out of Paradise to care for a world, under the curse. Until the end of time, every mission will have to do with sin and offered salvation.<sup>7</sup>

The *second* sent one was Noah: not told to *go* somewhere; he was on ‘home assignment’. He had to announce judgment over his generation and build the Ark, the only offered possibility of salvation.

The *third* one was indeed told to *go*: Abram had to leave his country, people and father’s house to go to the country God would show him. He went with a world-encompassing fourfold promise: ‘I will make you into a great nation; I will bless you; I will make your name great; you will be a blessing and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’.<sup>8</sup> He had to sacrifice to obtain that promise: leaving all that was familiar and embark on an adventure he could not fully grasp at first. With Abram’s action the *Missio Dei* became visible: God’s first redemptive *person* would grow into a redemptive *nation*.

The *last* person in Genesis, sent by God, is Joseph – although at first it looked as if he was sent on just an errand by Jacob.<sup>9</sup> This is the first story, where the *father* sends his *son*.

The *first sent* person who became a *sender* is Abraham, when he sent his servant Eliezer to look for a bride for his son Isaac.

Later we read how Isaac, the *next* sender, sent his son Jacob to find a wife.<sup>10</sup>

The *third* sender is Jacob, who sent his beloved son Joseph to look for his other sons, who herded his flocks in the dangerous area of Shechem.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Gen. 3:15,17-19

<sup>8</sup> 12:1-3

<sup>9</sup> 37:13; 45:5; 50:20; Ps. 105:16-22

<sup>10</sup> Chs. 24 and 28 respectively

<sup>11</sup> 37:13; Gen. 34

The *fourth* and last sender is Joseph. After he met his brothers in Egypt, he sent them back to fetch his brother Benjamin.

Many themes of Genesis converge in chapters 37-50. The stories of Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, Joseph's rule and salvation ministry might be called a micro-Bible. They contain major elements of God, ruling in history, placing strategic human characters along the line of time to execute His plans to save people. They present an image of the divine Salvation Plan as executed in the New Testament through Jesus Christ.

### *Study Questions*

1. *In what way does the Trinity introduce Himself?*
2. *How has man been created in His image?*
3. *What are men's two different levels of fellowship?*
4. *Define both the Missio Dei and the Missiones Ecclesiae.*
5. *Who were the 'sent ones' in Genesis?*
6. *And who of those became 'senders' later?*

## *Theme 2: Sent, But To Do What? The Mandate*

The first sending we read about in Genesis is the *creation-mandate* in which man is commissioned to rule<sup>12</sup> and to ‘be fruitful, increase, fill the earth, and subdue it’. This mandate implied the working of the Garden and taking care of it.<sup>13</sup>

The creation-mandate was not withdrawn after the fall, but its execution now encountered hindrances. There would be pain<sup>14</sup> in birthing children, in marriage relationships, in agricultural reproduction and in the work place (heavy work).

The *post-Flood mandate*<sup>15</sup> reminds us of the creation-mandate; yet it appears to have lost its original brilliance. The primary meaning of ‘ruling’ was: serving what was entrusted to you – but it degenerated into ‘lording it over’. When Jesus Christ appeared on earth He restored the right perspective on Godly leadership.<sup>16</sup>

With Abram, the mandate became focused on the blessing through him of all the families on earth. It was repeated through God’s revelations to Isaac and Jacob.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, world missions include holistic *salvation outreach* to man, as well as *caring outreach* to flora and fauna including the environment.

Before Abraham, type of God the Father, became a sender, he had his own ministry. He worshipped the true God,<sup>18</sup> set the captives free, tithed to Melchisedec, testified to the king of Sodom,<sup>19</sup> interceded for the lost,<sup>20</sup> prayed for healing of a pagan king’s household,<sup>21</sup> and was prepared to sacrifice Isaac.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 1:26,28

<sup>13</sup> 2:15

<sup>14</sup> 3:16,17

<sup>15</sup> 9:1-3

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 20:25-28

<sup>17</sup> Gen. 12:1-3, 26:2-4,24 and 28:13-15, 35:11,12 respectively

<sup>18</sup> 12:7,8; 13:18

<sup>19</sup> 14:18-20,22,23

<sup>20</sup> 18:16-33

<sup>21</sup> 20:7,17,18

<sup>22</sup> Ch. 22

*Abraham as first human sender:*

He sent Eliezer to find a bride for Isaac. This typifies how God the Father sent the Holy Spirit to find a Bride, the Church, for His Son. Eliezer prayed before he addressed Rebecca; the Holy Spirit intercedes for the saints.<sup>23</sup>

Before Isaac, type of God's Son, became a sender, he also had a ministry. He was willing to be sacrificed,<sup>24</sup> received his bride from elsewhere,<sup>25</sup> prayed for his wife,<sup>26</sup> received the Lord's revelation of Abraham's blessing now resting on him,<sup>27</sup> worshipped the true God<sup>28</sup> and begot two peoples,<sup>29</sup> (pictures of the true and the false church, growing up together until they went their separate ways).

*The second sender, Isaac:*

Similar to Abraham, Isaac sent Jacob to find himself a wife, outside Canaan. Typological significance is found in the separation between the brothers. Esau represents carnal Christianity, from which Jacob had to separate himself. Jacob should not be contaminated with the idolatrous Canaanite atmosphere in which Esau had placed himself.<sup>30</sup>

Before Jacob became a sender, he, too, showed ministerial characteristics. He met God and received the blessing of Abraham and Isaac,<sup>31</sup> found his wife outside the world of Canaan,<sup>32</sup> grew into a clan that would bring forth the nation of Israel, showed pastoral care for his flocks as well as for his 'family-flock',<sup>33</sup> prayed for his family,<sup>34</sup> represents true Christianity, but God had to deal with him in order to free him from his old nature.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Rom. 8:26

<sup>24</sup> Gen. 22; Ps. 40:7,8; Matt. 26:42

<sup>25</sup> Gen. 24; Matt. 22:2; Rev. 19:7,8

<sup>26</sup> Gen. 25:21; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25

<sup>27</sup> Gen. 26:2-5,24

<sup>28</sup> 26:25

<sup>29</sup> 25:22,23

<sup>30</sup> 26:34,35; 27:46-28:1,8

<sup>31</sup> 28:10-22

<sup>32</sup> 28:1,2; 29:18-30

<sup>33</sup> 30:27-31:41; 32:7,8; 33:13,14; John 10:11,14

<sup>34</sup> Gen. 32:9-12

<sup>35</sup> 32:22-32; Rom. 6:6; 7:24; Gal. 2:20

*The third sender, Jacob:*

In this story the strongest typological value of Genesis is found. Jacob (now representing God the Father) sent his beloved son Joseph (representing Jesus Christ), to look for his brothers.<sup>36</sup> The brothers represent lost humanity, which Jesus Christ came to save. In a sense Joseph later also ‘saved’ his brothers.

Joseph’s ministry was more Christ-like than that of his three ancestors had been. He displayed several characteristics of Jesus: his brothers envied him and felt threatened by him,<sup>37</sup> as did Jesus’ physical family and the Pharisees.<sup>38</sup> Joseph was called by dreams to rule and so was Jesus, by divine ordination.<sup>39</sup> Joseph had to be stripped of his wealth and position to become a slave before he could rule, as was the case with Jesus.<sup>40</sup> In the case of Joseph, it looked as if he had laid down his life; Jesus actually did so voluntarily.<sup>41</sup> Joseph and Jesus were treated unjustly on many occasions; Joseph might have abused his favored position in prison to stir up a rebellion and escape, but didn’t; similarly Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane might be considered a desire to escape, but He preferred to do God’s will instead.<sup>42</sup> Joseph preached in prison, announcing freedom for the cupbearer and condemnation for the baker; Jesus preached to the spirits in prison.<sup>43</sup> After his humiliation Joseph was elevated to the second highest place in Egypt; Jesus received the position at the right hand of God.<sup>44</sup> Joseph received a new name from Pharaoh: Zaphenath-Paneah (‘savior of the world’<sup>45</sup>); he saved people from physical starvation, whereas Jesus, Savior of the World, provides salvation for people from spiritual starvation and received the Name above every name.<sup>46</sup> After a considerable period had

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<sup>36</sup> Gen. 37:3; Matt. 3:17; Gen 37:16; Matt. 15:24

<sup>37</sup> Gen. 37:11,8

<sup>38</sup> Compare 37:4 e.g. with Mark 6:3, Matt. 21:45,46 & John 12:19

<sup>39</sup> Gen. 37:5-10; Ps. 2

<sup>40</sup> Gen. 37:18-28; Phil. 2:5-11

<sup>41</sup> Gen. 37:31-33; Is. 53; John 10:17,18

<sup>42</sup> Gen. 39:22,23a; Matt. 26:39,42,44

<sup>43</sup> Gen. 40; 1 Pet. 3:19

<sup>44</sup> Matt. 26:64

<sup>45</sup> F.J. Dake, *Annotated Reference Bible*: Zaphenath-Paneah means ‘abundance of life’, translated by Jerome as ‘savior of the world’ (Dake p. 41). See also: F.B. Meyer, *Great Men of the Bible*, 1981:126

<sup>46</sup> John 1:29; 3:16-18; Phil. 2:9,10

passed Joseph made himself known to his brothers; similarly, Jesus will make Himself known to His 'brothers after the flesh', the Jews.<sup>47</sup> Joseph forgave his brothers for what they had done, as Jesus would do later.<sup>48</sup>

*Joseph, as fourth sender:*

Jesus, sent by the Father, later sent His disciples to reach the nations with the Gospel: the Sent One became the Sender.<sup>49</sup> Joseph, also sent by his father, became sender himself: he sent his brothers to collect Benjamin and told them that they would not see his face again, unless they would bring the youngest brother.<sup>50</sup> Jesus said that He will only return after the Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in the entire world, before the end comes.<sup>51</sup> The last converts of the nations<sup>52</sup> have to be brought in before we will see Him again.

*Study Questions*

1. Define the terms 'caring mandate' and 'outreach mandate'.
2. Explain what types Abraham, Isaac, Eliezer, Rebecca, Esau, Jacob and Joseph represent.
3. Explain some ministry characteristics of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.
4. Which sent ones in Genesis became senders themselves?
5. Compare the lives of Joseph and Jesus as extensively as you can.
6. Explain the eschatological significance of Joseph, sending for Benjamin.

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<sup>47</sup> Gen. 45; Zech. 12:10; John 19:37; Rev. 1:7

<sup>48</sup> Gen. 45:3-8; 50:15-21; Luke 23:34

<sup>49</sup> John 20:21; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8

<sup>50</sup> Gen. 42:18-20; 44:23

<sup>51</sup> Matt. 24:14

<sup>52</sup> The last converts of the nations were born again the last. In a spiritual sense they are the youngest.

### *Theme 3: Man's Sin Problem*

God created man to have fellowship with Him: He wanted a lover with whom He could share His heart, blessings, power, dominion and Throne. Therefore He created man with a free will. Relationships that do not come from free moral choice are not relationships of love. Created as a free moral agent, man can choose to accept or reject such a relationship. God made this choice visible by placing two kinds of trees in the Garden. Man was instructed not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.<sup>53</sup> The consequence of the choice was life or death.

The *nature* of Eve's temptation does not differ from how people are tempted today. They fall for the same arguments when it comes to exactly quoting God's words. This fall had nothing accidental, it started with pre-meditated sin: the arguments were well thought-through and the act was committed deliberately. There was no excuse.<sup>54</sup>

The *content* of the temptation<sup>55</sup> Eve faced consisted of doubt about the word of God, which Satan had sown into her heart: 'Did God really say...?' – then saying something God had not said, namely that man could not eat from any tree in the Garden. The woman answered in a way that departed from God's literal words by adding 'and you must not touch it'.

The devil then leaves his subtlety by flatly denying God's warning that they would 'surely die'. Satan interpreted God's words differently from how He meant them. God spoke first of all about a spiritual death: man forfeited his relationship with God. After that, physical death would be a time bomb in their lives and in that of their descendants. This is what Satan did not speak about. His next argument was: 'you will be like God, knowing good and evil'. People interpret this half-truth today as 'you will be a bit of god yourself'.

Man found out the hard way that knowing good and evil did not make him happier, because this knowledge is not neutral. From the moment man got to know sin he was hooked.

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<sup>53</sup> Gen. 2:9,16,17

<sup>54</sup> '... so that men are without excuse ...' (Rom. 1:20b)

<sup>55</sup> Gen. 3:1-5

The *motive* behind the temptation is that Satan himself wanted to be like God<sup>56</sup> and injected that desire into the heart of man. Man had been created to rule,<sup>57</sup> so all Satan had to do was use this God-given purpose and defile it by selfish motives. Such motives know no limits and overstep God's boundaries. Man's power only functions well within these, but Satan seduces people to desire what goes beyond what God purposes for them.

Satan uses the same pattern of temptation repeatedly and the Bible warns us constantly. Since Gen. 3 we understand who planted evil in man's heart, although man became a willing field to receive these weeds. The consequences of man's sin were a consciousness of nakedness, a fear for God, the urge to hide, blame shifting and others, culminating in spiritual and physical death.<sup>58</sup> From James we learn that two parties are involved in generating sin:<sup>59</sup> the tempting power of sin, and man's own evil desire – over which he should rule.<sup>60</sup> Understanding this is vital to world missions. If we know our enemy and his limited power, as well as Jesus' victory over him, we have a message for the world.

The sin of one couple affected the whole of creation:<sup>61</sup> man and his descendants as well as flora and fauna came under the curse.<sup>62</sup> When Cain murdered Abel, God said that killing brings a curse.<sup>63</sup> Murder is the worst of sins and generates the strongest guilt-consciousness. The only way to deal with that, safe repentance is to justify oneself. The *consequence* is a hardening of heart. Cain did not repent and left God's presence after which he founded his own God-less line of descendants.<sup>64</sup> Later Noah perceived a curse on his grandson Canaan for the sin of Ham.<sup>65</sup> Canaan inherited that curse because Ham did not repent of his impurity. Therefore this root of sin continued unchallenged, poisoning later generations.

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<sup>56</sup> Is. 14:13,14

<sup>57</sup> Gen. 1:26,28

<sup>58</sup> 3:10, 8, 13 & 14 respectively

<sup>59</sup> James 1:14,15

<sup>60</sup> Gen. 4:7b

<sup>61</sup> 3:14-19

<sup>62</sup> Rom. 8:19-21

<sup>63</sup> Gen. 4:8-13

<sup>64</sup> 4:17-24

<sup>65</sup> 9:20-27

God added a clause in His promise to Abram:<sup>66</sup> cursing the Lord's chosen, whether individual man or a whole people, causes the curse to return on who pronounced it.<sup>67</sup>

Idolatry leads to death too early, and to not reaching one's destination. Rachel stole her father's household gods; unable to abandon the spiritual contamination of her father's house. Ignorant about the guilty party, Jacob pronounced death on the trespasser.<sup>68</sup> Not long after that Rachel died in childbirth without ever reaching Isaac's tents, her home by promise.<sup>69</sup> Although the family rid itself of these gods,<sup>70</sup> we don't read about repentance, which might have lifted Jacob's curse over Rachel. Later in the Scriptures we see cases where punishment was decreased when the trespasser(s) repented.<sup>71</sup>

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain why man was created a free moral agent.*
2. *With what arguments did Satan deceive Eve?*
3. *What was Satan's motive to seduce mankind?*
4. *Which two parties are involved in generating sin, according to James?*
5. *What happens when you don't repent of your sins?*
6. *Explain why Rachel died in childbirth.*

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<sup>66</sup> 12:2

<sup>67</sup> 27:29b

<sup>68</sup> 31:32

<sup>69</sup> 35:16-20

<sup>70</sup> 35:2,4

<sup>71</sup> See e.g. 1 Kings 21:20-29, or Jonah

#### *Theme 4: The Originator of Sin – Satan Contaminated the Human Race*

There is *only one* God-ordained enemy of mankind, the devil<sup>72</sup> and his followers, the fallen angels. God put enmity between us and them. They are our real enemies and have inspired all enmity between humans. God never meant there to be enmity among humans.

One of Satan's tactics has always been to initiate evil, then hide and do as if he doesn't exist. He appears almost nowhere openly in the Old Testament, and only when Jesus ministered on earth were the works of the devil exposed and broken.<sup>73</sup>

When we take close looks at Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 we see glimpses of what happened in heaven, long ago. In Isaiah we read what is written about the king of Babylon<sup>74</sup> – this king being typical of Satan. Several things written in this passage cannot possibly apply to a mere human king. Therefore it has more significance when we apply it to another 'king': one who was given certain authority and responsibility in the heavenly kingdom, a power he used for selfish ends.

In Ezekiel we see another description (typified by the king of Tyre) of who Satan was before his fall.<sup>75</sup> He was covered with unimaginable heavenly splendor and glory. God called him a guardian cherub, a throne angel.<sup>76</sup> Before his fall, this cherub, originally called Morning Star or Son of the Dawn, found himself at the center of universal rule.

Continually he saw God in His ruling authority, seated at the highest throne, exerting all power and receiving all the glory, worship and adoration. That was more than this cherub could take. The great splendor that surrounded and clothed him was not enough. He wanted more. Being less than the Most High was what he could no longer accept. He became jealous and rebelled, and seduced one third of the angels to join him.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Gen. 3:15a

<sup>73</sup> Col. 2:15; 1 John 3:8b

<sup>74</sup> Is. 14:4

<sup>75</sup> Ez. 28:1-19

<sup>76</sup> 1 Sam. 4:4; Ps. 99:1; Is. 37:16 etc.

<sup>77</sup> As may be derived from the figures of speech in Rev. 9:1 & 12:4

When Satan was cursed and a Savior had been promised to lost humanity,<sup>78</sup> he developed his next strategy: corrupting the human race so that it would become unable to bring forth that Savior.<sup>79</sup> God counteracted this by shortening man's life span, in order to limit his capacity for sin and his subsequent suffering under its burden.

Today we see this happen again, for the same reason. In most parts of the world man's life-expectation becomes lower and lower, due to poverty, sickness, wars, famines, earthquakes, floods that lead to death – all because of sin. People are now dying at an earlier age than before. Where sin increases, life-expectation decreases. It is one of the laws of humanity that God put in place<sup>80</sup> – not a law of punishment but one of mercy: earthly human suffering is thus limited to a lesser number of years.

The wording of the problems on earth is very strong: 'The Lord saw how *great* man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that *every* inclination of the thoughts of his heart was *only* evil *all the time*'.<sup>81</sup> Before God spoke about the necessity of a judgment, He explained how humanity had sinned beyond recovery. Further on we read about an all-encompassing corruption.<sup>82</sup>

The outcome was horrible enough at the time, but we cannot read the story of the Flood from a historical perspective only. It has considerable significance for today too because of what Jesus said.<sup>83</sup> Just before He returns to earth the behavior of its inhabitants will be comparable to that of Noah's generation. Moral decay and crime increase, environmental pollution worsens, bad behavior and attitudes prevail and occultism spreads like wildfire. Jesus said: 'When the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth?'<sup>84</sup> This situation is not improving, so we need to save what can be saved. That is our world mission.

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<sup>78</sup> Gen. 3:15

<sup>79</sup> 6:1-4

<sup>80</sup> 6:3

<sup>81</sup> 6:5 (*italics mine*)

<sup>82</sup> 6:11,12

<sup>83</sup> Matt. 24:37-39

<sup>84</sup> Luke 18:8b

We see two other examples of the spread of corruption in Genesis, the *first* when Canaan inherited a curse because of his father's sin.<sup>85</sup> Over a millennium later (!) the sins of his descendants are judged through Israel – but only after the 'sin of the Amorites had reached its full measure'.<sup>86</sup> God is slow to anger and wants none to perish.<sup>87</sup>

The *second* example we see in Judah's sins: first he married a Canaanite woman, and after her death he visited a prostitute (his daughter-in-law in disguise). Later in the history of Israel we see that these sins have become patterns<sup>88</sup> (part of Israel's male population committed immorality with Moabite women and there was much intermarriage up to the time of Ezra).<sup>89</sup>

Fathers instill patterns of behavior in the lives of their children by example and words. These children, in maturing, make choices to either accept or reject their fathers' behavior. If they reject the God-fearing life style of their parents, they will be counted as sinners in their own right. If, on the other hand, they reject their parents' sinful behavior and turn to the Lord, they will be saved of their sins and be counted as righteous by the Lord. The crux of the matter is repentance. God has never turned anyone down who came to Him in the humble attitude of a sinner and invariably, where judgment takes place, repentance has consistently lacked.

### *Study Questions*

1. *What is the only good type of enmity?*
2. *Which two Scripture chapters grant us insight in Satan's fall?*
3. *What was Satan's root-motive to rebel against God?*
4. *What did Satan do, to prevent the birth of Jesus?*
5. *Explain why life-expectancy decreases when sin increases.*
6. *Explain Canaan's corruption as well as Judah's, and include the long-term consequences of their behavior.*

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<sup>85</sup> Gen. 10:24-27

<sup>86</sup> 15:16b

<sup>87</sup> 2 Pet. 3:9

<sup>88</sup> Compare the root sin in Gen. 38 with a people-wide bad fruit in Numb. 25

<sup>89</sup> Ezra 9 & 10

### *Theme 5: God's Solution for the Sin Problem*

God is looking for man, though he sinned.<sup>90</sup> This brings us to our fifth theme. Man knew he blew it, ran away and tried to hide. We see for the first time how unique our God is in comparison to other gods: He seeks the lost.<sup>91</sup> Other gods can only be found by man's own effort – but they cannot save him.<sup>92</sup>

God's character has two sides: He is all-loving as well as righteous and just.<sup>93</sup> He loved sinners enough to leave heaven to live among them and at the same time hated sin enough to lay down His life for it. God made a missionary out of His only Son. His mission existed of three components: He was to become in the likeness of man;<sup>94</sup> He was to live a sinless life;<sup>95</sup> He had to die innocently in order to justify sinners that believe in Him.<sup>96</sup>

This attitude grants Him the right to confront man with his sin.<sup>97</sup> Man has to account for his deeds and there is no escape.<sup>98</sup> We see how God executes His first judgment:<sup>99</sup> He deals with all parties equally, without partiality, evaluating them and assessing their share of guilt. God starts His judgment by dealing with the originator,<sup>100</sup> the serpent, later revealed as Satan. He does so by cursing him, by setting enmity between him and humanity and by announcing his ultimate fall, the crushing of his head.

He deals with the originator first but not exclusively. He addresses the woman before the man because she sinned first. Adam was seduced to sin by the woman, but this did not plead him free.<sup>101</sup> After the woman heard her verdict, the man too, faced the consequences of his disobedience.

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<sup>90</sup> Gen. 3:9

<sup>91</sup> Matt. 18:12-14

<sup>92</sup> Dan. 3:29

<sup>93</sup> John 3:16 & Heb. 10:31

<sup>94</sup> Phil. 2:7,8

<sup>95</sup> Heb. 4:15

<sup>96</sup> John 1:29,36; 1 Pet. 1:19

<sup>97</sup> Gen. 3:11

<sup>98</sup> 4:9-12; Deut. 32:36; Ps. 135:14; Heb. 9:27

<sup>99</sup> Gen. 3:12,13

<sup>100</sup> 3:14,15

<sup>101</sup> 3:16,17

Sin never just happens to people. They have to accept sin – and accept the responsibility for it. People must face the consequences of their deeds: they reap what they sow, for life or for death.<sup>102</sup>

Here the Good News appears. We see for the first time that God comes up with a solution for the sin problem: He clothed man with garments of skin.<sup>103</sup> Animals had to be killed and blood be shed to cover man's nakedness and provide a temporary reconciliation between his shame and his surroundings. It points for the first time to the principle, worded later in Hebrews: '... without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness'.<sup>104</sup>

The 'Mother-Promise'<sup>105</sup> shows that enmity between humanity and the sin-originator is God-ordained. In the battle against sin He is on our side! It is not to be an enmity between humans. Furthermore, God promised victory for the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, Who crushed the serpent's head at Calvary; and finally: striking the heel is all Satan can do: it is not vital, but hinders and delays the redemption process. This promise was the first announcement of a Savior Who would open the way of salvation to all. He is the First and only possibility God ever mentioned for salvation.<sup>106</sup>

When we consider the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, we see that Cain worked the soil and brought some of its fruits as an offering. He gave of his *works* and thought he could earn God's favor through effort. Abel brought fat portions (a type of worship) from the firstborn of his flock.<sup>107</sup> He understood things his brother missed: first that sin was serious enough to shed blood for; second that his first earnings (firstborn) belonged to the Lord. Abel gave God the first place in his life.

God did not blame Cain for not understanding; He took time to talk to him and offered a solution for his problem, which was anger and depression ('downcast'). God explained that Cain had the ability to choose either good or bad behavior.

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<sup>102</sup> Gal. 6:7,8

<sup>103</sup> Gen. 3:21

<sup>104</sup> Heb. 9:22

<sup>105</sup> Gen. 3:15

<sup>106</sup> John 14:6; Acts 4:12

<sup>107</sup> Gen. 4:2-4

God said that the danger of a bad choice is: increased vulnerability to sin's influence, which wants to master man. Yet it has been given to man to master over sin and not let it reign in his life.<sup>108</sup> But Cain left God's presence.<sup>109</sup> From then on two sorts of people walk through history: Cain's *godless* branch and Seth's *Godly* one.

In Noah's story<sup>110</sup> we see a pattern, appearing throughout the Bible: God sees sin and decides to act;<sup>111</sup> then He calls and sends a man (prophet, judge or missionary); this sent one (Greek: *αποστέλλω*, *apostello*) speaks on God's behalf; the majority does not believe and persists in its unbelief; judgment comes as announced and the remnant is saved because they believe God.

Other stories in the Bible show this pattern too, e.g. Israel's liberation from Egypt, her liberations during the Judges-era, and the return of a remnant after the exile. The commonality in these stories is that everything stands or falls with faith or unbelief in God's revelation. In the New Testament we see it in Christ, God's Ark, the only way of salvation.

### *Study Questions*

1. *What is the unique characteristic of God?*
2. *What are the two sides of God's character?*
3. *What were the three components of Jesus' mission?*
4. *In what order did God deal with the guilty parties and why?*
5. *Explain the spiritual meaning of God's act when He clothed Adam & Eve in animal skins.*
6. *In what verse do we read the mother-promise?*
7. *Describe God's 'warning pattern', preceding judgment.*

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<sup>108</sup> 4:5b-7; Rom. 6:12

<sup>109</sup> Gen. 4:16

<sup>110</sup> 6:9 – 7:24

<sup>111</sup> 3:22-24; 4:9-15; 6:5-7,11-14

### *Theme 6: Man-made 'Solutions' for the Sin Problem*

From the day of the fall, man had to live with the manifold consequences of sin. His conscience told him that he was wrong, that he was guilty towards his fellow man and towards God. Man was bothered by his conscience; it was like a pain in his soul for which he sought relief. All the time he knew: "I am wrong, I have to change". At the same time he understood by his frequently repeated sins that it is very hard to change, let alone do away with the accumulated guilt.

Some cried out to God for help, others hardened their hearts and tried to silence their consciences. The word 'conscience' is made up of two words, 'con' and 'science' and they literally mean '(together) with' and 'knowing'. God knows that sin is wrong and through his con-science man 'knows together with God' that his particular sin is wrong.

In Gen. 4 we see the first pair of brothers, Cain and Abel, present a sacrifice (not a gift!) to God. Both, mature men as they were, were conscious of their sins.

Abel understood that there can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood and in sacrificing an animal he simply followed the example of God,<sup>112</sup> of which he doubtlessly had heard from his parents. He had come to understand that sin inevitably leads to death because when his parents had sinned, God killed an animal to cover their nakedness. Blood had to flow on behalf of them and Abel understood that it would be no different for him, so he voluntarily killed and shed blood to atone for his sins. It provided him with a cover in the eyes of God and his conscience received peace.

Cain, on the other hand, had no such understanding. He probably did not know what to do about his sins and had silenced the outcry of his conscience by hardening his heart. He accepted his sinful behavior by trying to convince himself 'that's the way I am' without trying to change. Yet, he still knew that his attitude was not right and one day, maybe following the good example of his brother, he decided that it could do him no harm if he

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<sup>112</sup> Gen. 3:21

too brought an offering. It is this hardened and unrepentant heart that still has some elementary sin-awareness left that starts to display religious behavior: it looks right, it may even feel right, but it is not, at least not in the eyes of God. Cain knew he had sinned but might have considered it too small a thing to kill and shed blood for, like his brother had done. In fact, Cain's sacrifice was an offering of works, whereas Abel's sacrifice was one of faith. It is obvious that he did not receive the inner peace Abel had and he noticed the difference. That difference made him jealous, angry and depressed.

After a while he translated his unhappy feelings into bitterness and the wish for revenge. Later he could not bear it anymore and killed his brother who, by his godly character, kept shaking Cain's conscience awake – which Cain had previously done his best to silence. But at last he was liberated of this pain in the neck, Abel.

It was by this first murder that an initial separation of mankind took place: between those who follow God in His ways and those who think they follow Him but are walking their own ways. The second persecuted the first and so it has been ever since. All through history the counterfeit followers have persecuted the true followers of God.

As early as in Gen. 4 we see the first separation between the true and the false church. This will be further explored under Theme 10, where we will look at the origins of Babylon. That separation will culminate into a worldwide conflict at the end of time, which the Bible calls the great tribulation.<sup>113</sup>

In Gen. 4 we see the only real separation there is in humanity: the ones *with* God and those *without* Him. This has been true throughout the era called 'time' and will remain true throughout eternity. Therefore it is of utmost importance that the first group does everything within its power to warn the second group and bring them back to God. That is our mission – a mission really of which God is the architect – a mission that states that God wants no one to be separated from Him and perish.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Matt. 24:21

<sup>114</sup> 2 Pet. 3:9

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain the meaning of the word and the concept of 'conscience'.*
2. *Explain why God accepted Abel's sacrifice and why Cain's offering was not accepted.*
3. *What are, since Cain & Abel, the two categories of people that live in the world?*
4. *What did and does the one group do to the other, causing suffering?*

### *Theme 7: God's Covenant with the Son of the Promise*

The theme of the son (Son) is central in the Bible: Isaac is the first type of Christ.<sup>115</sup> God promised Abraham: 'a son from your own body will be your heir'.<sup>116</sup> He spoke about *a* son, but did not mention Sarah, as if remaining vague on purpose.

God gives a promise and man seeks how he can 'help' God fulfill it. Look at Sarah's word 'perhaps'.<sup>117</sup> Abraham failed to ask for God's guidance. What followed was a family tragedy that will later culminate into a worldwide conflict.<sup>118</sup>

<b>Ishmael</b>	<b>Isaac</b>
Ishmael's birth was not foretold	Isaac's birth was announced
Son of the flesh	Son of the promise
Conceived after the will of man	Conceived at God's word
Son of the slave woman	Son of the free woman
Rebellious character <sup>119</sup>	Man of God <sup>120</sup>
Received certain blessings <sup>121</sup>	Received the full covenant <sup>122</sup>
Twelve rulers would come from him	Israel would consist of twelve tribes
Became a great nation <sup>123</sup>	Became a blessing for all nations <sup>124</sup>
Father of the Arabs	Father of Jews and of all believers
Brought forth Islam	Via him came Judaism & Christianity
No salvation for Muslims outside Christ	Salvation through faith in Christ <sup>125</sup>

God needs no help to fulfill His promises; instead, human 'help' often hinders His purposes. Maybe He expressed Himself so vaguely, to see how Abraham would deal with waiting periods. This test he failed, as would Jacob later, when he cunningly obtained the right of the firstborn.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Gen. 15-18; 21, 22, 24 – 27

<sup>116</sup> 15:4b

<sup>117</sup> 16:2

<sup>118</sup> Zech. 12:3

<sup>119</sup> Gen. 16:12

<sup>120</sup> 24:63; 25:21

<sup>121</sup> 16:10; 17:20

<sup>122</sup> 17:19,21

<sup>123</sup> 25:12-18

<sup>124</sup> 17:16

<sup>125</sup> John 14:6; Acts 4:12

<sup>126</sup> Gen. 25:31-34

Finally, promise *and* recipients, Abraham *and* Sarah, are mentioned specifically:<sup>127</sup> the covenant line would run via Isaac, not via Ishmael.

Abraham and Isaac are types of God the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ.<sup>128</sup> In the next generation the line of the promise continues with the younger son, Jacob.<sup>129</sup> It is remarkable that Isaac, being the younger son of the promise, ignored this principle when it came to blessing his descendants, although God had spoken clearly before the boys were born. He too acted on his own initiative – the consequence being that his household split up,<sup>130</sup> never to be re-united completely.

Was Isaac's plan a deliberate act of disobedience motivated by temporal and carnal appetites? Of course, the way in which Rebecca and Jacob dealt with it was equally wrong and the result was that they probably never saw each other again after Jacob had fled. After this, Rebecca's name is not mentioned again. Maybe she died before Jacob returned twenty years later.

All sons of the promise, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, were born from barren women, Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel. These women all had to be prayed for in order to conceive, and none of their sons of promise was the oldest. A significant spiritual image lies hidden in this principle.

*The oldest son* is typical for the old life of the NT believers, that which came from the natural birth. The behavior of Ishmael and Esau runs parallel to what Paul would later describe as the works of the flesh.<sup>131</sup>

*The youngest son* is typical of the new life of the believer, which comes from being born again. This new life is their younger life – it starts later than the old life – and begins after their spiritual birth. None of the boys Isaac, Jacob or Joseph was born by the power of man but exclusively by the promise of God.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> 17:16,19,21

<sup>128</sup> See Theme 2

<sup>129</sup> Gen. 25:33 & 28:13-15

<sup>130</sup> Chs. 27 & 28

<sup>131</sup> Compare e.g. Gen. 16:12 and 27:39,40 with Gal. 5:19-21

<sup>132</sup> Compare this with John 1:12,14 and 3:3-8

Every believer has these two natures and must make the older serve the younger: to submit the cravings of the carnal nature to the demands of the new life in Christ.<sup>133</sup>

In the last part (37-50) of Genesis the patriarchal promises were not repeated to Joseph: his were the promises God gave him in the two dreams.<sup>134</sup> Yet, he is the clearest early example of being a blessing to all nations; he saved them from *physical* starvation. This makes him one of the most important types of Christ, the Bread of Life, Who would provide salvation from *spiritual* starvation.<sup>135</sup> Joseph is one of the greatest characters in the book of Genesis.

When blessing Joseph's sons, Jacob gave the more important blessing to Ephraim, the younger.<sup>136</sup> Joseph, by choice, would have made the same mistake Isaac had wanted to make earlier.<sup>137</sup> But Jacob understood God's principle in His dealings with the son of the promise, that of the older being less than the younger.

### *Study Questions*

1. *What happens often, when people start to 'help God fulfill His promises' to them?*
2. *Sum up at least five differences between Isaac and Ishmael.*
3. *Abraham and Isaac are types of ... and ...*
4. *What did the mothers of the sons of promise have in common?*
5. *'The older will serve the younger'. What is the typological significance of this verse (mention the NT principle it refers to)?*
6. *Joseph saved people from ... starvation; Jesus saves people from ... starvation.*

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<sup>133</sup> See e.g. Rom 6; Col. 3 and Heb. 12

<sup>134</sup> Gen. 37:5-10

<sup>135</sup> John 6:33-35

<sup>136</sup> Gen. 48:13-20

<sup>137</sup> Compare Gen. 27 with 48:17-19

### *Theme 8: Examples of God's Universalistic Purpose*

We must make a distinction between the words *universal* and *universalistic*. With *universal* I mean *applicable* to all, and with *universalistic* I mean *available* to all. So, when speaking about God's salvation we cannot say that it is *universal*. That would mean that everyone who ever lived would be saved and that therefore there is no place for judgment, condemnation, punishment or hell. It would not really matter then, whether one sins or not, whether high moral standards are maintained or not, whether one has a noble or an evil character. Therefore, we can never apply the word *universal* to only a part of humanity. There *are* things that can be considered universal: sin is, in the sense that (except for Jesus Christ) all men have sinned; death is universal and so is judgment.<sup>138</sup> There are no exceptions.

When we use the word *universalistic* we mean, speaking about salvation, that it is *available* to all men. Christ died for all: He offers salvation to all (that is a universalistic purpose) but not all accept it. Therefore salvation cannot be considered to be universal in its final result. Genesis gives us seven examples:

*Firstly*, the enmity God set between Satan and mankind<sup>139</sup> is universalistic: many choose to side with the devil. Everybody is *offered* to side with God against the devil, but not everybody *accepts*. Many love their sin too much.

*Secondly*, redemption becomes universalistically *available*<sup>140</sup> – but will never be universal so as to encompass all.

*Thirdly*, the facts that the ground is cursed, that death came to all people and that sin became the common denominator<sup>141</sup> are examples of *universalism*. It hits all, without exceptions.

*Fourthly*, God's covenant with Noah<sup>142</sup> was *universal*: made available to *you and your descendants* – encompassing all of humanity and *every* living creature.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Rom. 3:23; Heb. 9:27

<sup>139</sup> Gen. 3:14

<sup>140</sup> 3:15

<sup>141</sup> 3:17, 3:19 and 6:5,11,12 & 8:21 respectively

<sup>142</sup> 9:9-17

The promise that ‘*never again* will *all* life be cut off by the waters of a flood; *never again* will there be a flood to destroy *the earth*’ (italics mine) is *universal*: it is a waterproof promise. It is not a promise that applied to some but not to others; it was offered to sinners and saints alike. The sign of the rainbow is meant as a *universal* promise of protection.

*Fifthly*, in the next two chapters<sup>144</sup> we see that *all* nations were scattered, according to God’s original plan.<sup>145</sup> This scattering was *universal* in the sense that it applied to all. At the end of time<sup>146</sup> when representatives of *all* nations, tribes, peoples and tongues will stand before the throne, this scattering is eliminated. The word *all* then has to be understood again in a *universalistic* way: although salvation was offered to all, not all accepted it.

*Sixthly*, God’s covenant with *Abraham*<sup>147</sup> is *universalistic* in nature: it includes *all* peoples on earth to be blessed, but exclusively through his line, to be continued through Isaac,<sup>148</sup> Jacob,<sup>149</sup> the nation of Israel<sup>150</sup> and finally Jesus Christ and His Body on earth, the Church.<sup>151</sup> We see that God works in a *particularistic* way: He chose *one* man, developed him and his descendants into *one* nation, from which *one* Man came forth of whom *one* worldwide Body was born. This *particularism* could never lead to *universalism* since there would always be people who refuse to conform to God’s only, unique way of salvation. Therefore, the outcome of the Abrahamic covenant would be *universalistic* in nature.

*Finally*, in the story of Joseph in Egypt we see famine everywhere<sup>152</sup> (take note of the repeated words *all* and *whole* in all four verses).

The need for physical food was *universal* but the provision was *universalistic*: people had to decide themselves to go to Zaphenath-Paneah,<sup>153</sup> the only

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<sup>143</sup> 9:9,10-12,15-17

<sup>144</sup> 10 & 11

<sup>145</sup> 1:28

<sup>146</sup> Rev. 5:9 & 7:9

<sup>147</sup> Gen. 12:2,3

<sup>148</sup> 17:19

<sup>149</sup> 27:29; 28:13-15

<sup>150</sup> Ex. 19:5,6

<sup>151</sup> Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8

<sup>152</sup> Gen. 41:54-57

man from whom they could obtain grain. Joseph was their only hope. They had to conform or starve. The same applies today in a non-physical sense. The need for spiritual food is also *universal* but the provision is equally *universalistic* in nature as in Joseph's time. People have to decide themselves to go to Jesus Christ, the only one from whom they can obtain forgiveness for their sins and reconciliation with God. He is the only hope for mankind: no other name has been given through which they can be saved.<sup>154</sup> Summarizing it:

*Universalistic (available to all) is:*

*Enmity* between Satan and mankind;

*Redemption*: available, but not universal in the sense of encompassing all;

*All* nations, tribes, peoples, tongues. Salvation is *offered* to all but not *accepted* by all;

*All* peoples on earth were to be blessed, but only through Abraham and via Christ;

The *only solution* for the famine: people had to go to Zaphenath-Paneah;

The *only solution* for the spiritual famine: people have to go to Jesus Christ.

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<sup>153</sup> 41:45

<sup>154</sup> John 14:6; Acts 4:12

*Universal (applicable to all) is:*

The *curse* on the ground;

*Death*;

*Sin*;

The ‘*never again* promises’, offered to sinners and saints; the rainbow is a sign;

*All* nations were scattered;

The need for physical and spiritual food is *universal*.

### *Study Questions*

1. Define the words *universal* and *universalistic*.
2. What would the consequence be if salvation were *universal*?
3. What three components are *universally true* for all mankind?
4. Give three examples of what is *universal* and three of what is *universalistic* in the above text.

### *Theme 9: The Concept of the Nations*

Gen. 10 is the first ‘nations-chapter’ in the Bible: the word occurs 5 times.<sup>155</sup> This theme plays a dominant role, climaxing in Rev. 5:9 & 7:9. From the beginning God revealed Himself as Lord of all nations. He is not satisfied with less, because He created them. He reaches out to the lost and offers salvation to all. He would never be content with one small nation and forget about the rest. He is interested in every people group on earth and wants the good news to be preached to its utter limits.

In Gen. 11 we see that the nations strayed from God by uniting, although He had told them to scatter.<sup>156</sup> They planned to build a tower to reach to the heavens, to compete with the Most High. God acknowledged their evil intents and the power of their unity and confused their communication, in order to stop the building. Those who had refused to spread over the earth were now scattered by God Himself, in order to jeopardize the unlimited increase of evil that would otherwise have taken place. This happened in Babel and will be discussed under Theme 10.

The language confusion in Gen. 11 does not mean that God gave up on the nations. In Gen. 12 He made a new start with Abram, promising to bless the nations through a nation descending from him. The peoples in Gen. 11 wanted to make *themselves* a name:<sup>157</sup> they searched for identity, but outside God. Abram was not concerned about a name; he just did what God told him to do and then *God* promised to make him a name: He changed Abram’s name into Abraham.<sup>158</sup> This gave him a new identity and function. He would be the father of many nations and of all believers, through Christ.<sup>159</sup>

What the nations of Gen. 11 could not reach by their concerted effort, God gave in His grace to one man. In Abraham’s line, through Christ, all nations will be united before God’s throne, and long before that, there was a divine

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<sup>155</sup> Gen. 10:4,20,31,32a,32b

<sup>156</sup> 1:28; 9:1

<sup>157</sup> 11:4

<sup>158</sup> 17:5

<sup>159</sup> 17:4-8; Rom. 4:16 & Gal. 3:16,19,29 respectively

language-restoration.<sup>160</sup> Some limits of Gen. 11 were lifted in Acts 2; the nations' artificial attempt to reach unity outside God came to nothing. Yet, one man's faith allowed God to work out His purpose: to unite them in Himself through Christ.

In Gen. 16 & 21 we see two nations descending from *Abraham*: the line of the oldest son Ishmael, born of the slave woman, and that of the youngest son Isaac, born of the free woman. God made His promises to the latter. The former never conformed but rebelled (as did his mother Hagar) and they left the place of God's promises. Had they loved God, they would have submitted to God's chosen man, but they separated in attitude, life principles and character long before physical separation took place. The two would meet again, but not until Christ had broken down the wall of enmity<sup>161</sup> and both would submit to Him. Only in Christ hostile tribes and nations can be reconciled, provided they both recognize their sin and their need for His forgiveness. Walls between people, tribes and nations come down where different parties accept Christ's sacrifice.

*Lot*, too, left the blessing of Abraham's tents, to live an affluent life in godless Sodom. Peter calls Lot a man who 'tormented his righteous soul' by the sinful deeds he saw.<sup>162</sup> Lot is a type of the Christians who put material wealth above their relationship with God. Had his relationship with Him been the passion of his life, he would not have considered living in Sodom, but rather have been content with less wealth. Lot's influence in Sodom was too small to save it and he had to flee. His greed caused him to lose his possessions and his wife. It was a high price to pay for leaving the place of blessing. The worst came when his two daughters made their father drunk and caused him to commit incest with them.<sup>163</sup> Would Lot have come to drunkenness easily in Abraham's presence? Where did the daughters learn their wicked ways? And so Lot also fathered two nations, the Moabites and the Ammonites – who would give considerable trouble to Abraham's descendants later.

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<sup>160</sup> Acts 2:8-11

<sup>161</sup> Eph. 2:14

<sup>162</sup> 2 Pet. 2:8

<sup>163</sup> Gen. 18:30-38

We also see two nations descend from *Isaac* and Rebecca:<sup>164</sup> the Edomites via Esau and the Israelites via Jacob. These twins were too different to unite. There could have been salvation for the descendants of the older brother, provided they had gone along with God's direction to serve those of the younger. Yet, Esau's posterity thwarted God's purpose throughout history,<sup>165</sup> as Esau himself did. The two had to separate. After Esau despised his birth right<sup>166</sup> by preferring the carnal life of temporal pleasures above God's promises, he hardened himself by picking two Canaanite wives.<sup>167</sup> And so he begot an ungodly people that later bothered Israel repeatedly.<sup>168</sup>

Finally, we see that all nations had a common problem, famine.<sup>169</sup> There was only one solution: going to the savior of the land in Egypt, Joseph, who had been sent ahead.<sup>170</sup> Today we see that all nations also have a common problem, sin. For this problem too, there is only one solution: going to the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

### *Study Questions*

1. *What Bible passage form beginning and end of the theme of the Nations? (Use Genesis and Revelation)*
2. *Why did God have to confuse the language in Gen. 11?*
3. *How did God show that He had not given up on the nations?*
4. *Explain the connection between Gen. 11 and Acts 2.*
5. *Which two nations came from Abraham, which two from Lot and which two from Isaac?*
6. *What were the stupidities of Ishmael, Lot and Esau respectively?*

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<sup>164</sup> Ch. 25

<sup>165</sup> See e.g. Numb. 20:14-20

<sup>166</sup> Gen. 25:34

<sup>167</sup> 9:25; 10:15

<sup>168</sup> See e.g. Obadiah 1-14 & Mal. 1:2-5

<sup>169</sup> Gen. 41:54-57

<sup>170</sup> Ps.105:17

### *Theme 10: The Principle of Babel – From Community to System*

In Gen. 10 we read for the first time about Babel. Ham's sons are mentioned, Cush among them. When Cush's sons are summed up, we miss Nimrod but Cush is called Nimrod's father.<sup>171</sup> 'Father' can also mean: 'ancestor', or 'founder'.<sup>172</sup> This may be more logical.<sup>173</sup> Babylon, or Shinar, was one of the first centers of the kingdom Nimrod founded. Nineveh traces its roots back to Nimrod as well: he built this later capital of Assyria. Throughout biblical history both powers bothered God's people repeatedly.<sup>174</sup>

Another descendant from Ham was Mizraim (Egypt) to whom the Philistines trace their ancestry. Both peoples lived in almost unbroken hostility towards Israel.<sup>175</sup>

When we look at the peoples that descended from Canaan, we see the complete group that had to be driven out of the land that God had promised to Abraham.<sup>176</sup> The curse on Canaan came through in these seven people groups, over one thousand years later and also in subsequent years when Israel started to extinguish them because of their great wickedness.<sup>177</sup>

People wonder how a merciful God could allow one group of people to drive seven others out of their land, to be conquered and sometimes killed.<sup>178</sup> But how much *more* merciful should God have been, to tolerate peoples living in gross idolatry, immorality and violence for over a millennium, without punishment? The wages of sin is death<sup>179</sup> – a law that was not just applied to the Canaanite peoples but later to Israel as well, when *they* slipped into idolatry. The same axiom applies today. God expects

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<sup>171</sup> Gen. 10:6-8

<sup>172</sup> See footnote on 10:8 in the NIV

<sup>173</sup> E.g. 10:7,10,11

<sup>174</sup> During the Assyrian (1274-609 BC) and Babylonian (626-539 BC) periods

<sup>175</sup> During Israel's slavery in Egypt (1850-1450 BC) and Philistine dominance (1220-1010 BC)

<sup>176</sup> Gen. 10:15; Ex. 3:17; Deut. 7:1

<sup>177</sup> Deut. 9:4b. The curse, pronounced in 2456 BC, was effectuated from 1407 BC onwards

<sup>178</sup> Yet, this did not happen always, see e.g. Judges 1

<sup>179</sup> Rom. 6:23a

us to serve Him His way and to have no other gods besides Him. Disobeying His righteous demands means death!

Now, after this little excursion, we return to Nimrod. The Bible calls him 'a mighty hunter before the Lord' – to be understood as 'before the face of the Lord' and not as 'with the Lord's approval'. On the contrary: Nimrod was a hunter after human souls, he hunted for worship. He came from a line of people who had chosen their own way instead of God's and who reinforced their straying in their descendants. This 'mighty hunter' reminds us of the description Jesus gave of the devil, who only steals, kills and destroys.<sup>180</sup>

Fawcett comments: 'Nimrod, also known as Tammuz ... and his wife Semiramus founded the ... Babylonian religion. As the Babylonian empire conquered the world, Nimrod's pagan religion spread and was widely accepted. Elements of it can still be seen in most of the non-Christian religions today. After Nimrod's death he was deified as Tammuz the shepherd god, the god of fertility. His worship involved the vilest sexual orgies in which every woman had to participate ... His wife Semiramus was also worshipped as a goddess.' He then goes on to explain a number of practices and symbols of that religion and states that 'Egypt was wholly given over to pagan worship, based on the religion of Babylon, in the days of Israel's bondage there. Their bondage was both physical and spiritual because they adopted the ways and religion of that pagan empire.'<sup>181</sup>

In Gen. 11, shortly after Nimrod's time, all people still had the same language, culture, worldview and value system that helped them in their quest for super-unity. Such a unity for evil would certainly have invoked another pre-Messianic judgment. The fact that God scattered them before degeneration could go too far, was an act of grace rather than of punishment. Unity for good can only be achieved by those who are in Christ.<sup>182</sup> The language barriers of Gen. 11, where the divine-human dialogue was jeopardized, were partially restored in Acts 2.

Interestingly, the word 'Babel' in Hebrew means 'confusion' (balal), but in Babylonian it means 'gate to god' (bab-ili). This truth applies today too:

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<sup>180</sup> John 10:10

<sup>181</sup> J.R. Fawcett, *Feasts of the Lord*, Hebron Press, South Africa, 1993:7-10

<sup>182</sup> John 17:21-23

what the Gentiles in their religions see as a gateway to heaven is in fact a labyrinth of confusion.

After thwarting Godless human partnerships, God starts to organize a God-fearing humanity by calling Abram with huge promises.<sup>183</sup> Abram came from Chaldea, another name for Babylon. By leaving his home city, he became a traveler from the nations on his way to the Promised Land. Later, his people came out of Egypt on their way to the same land. Centuries later the people went into exile to Babylon because of their sins. When they came out after 70 years, in a way they prophesied over the end-time Church, who is also encouraged to come out of Babylon,<sup>184</sup> which by that time will have developed into a worldwide anti-Christian religious empire.

Nimrod's pagan principles led the community astray and became the model for an idolatrous, Godless anti-Christian system. This system has hindered the people of God throughout the centuries and will continue to do so until it will be destroyed when this present era ends.<sup>185</sup>

### *Study Questions*

1. *Who was the founder of Babel and Nineveh?*
2. *Explain the term 'a mighty hunter before the face of the Lord'.*
3. *How many years passed between the curse that Noah perceived on Canaan and the start of its actual fulfillment in judgment?*
4. *Explain the meaning of the Hebrew word 'balal' and of the Babylonian word 'bab-ili'.*
5. *What will be the final outcome of the original community that was established in Gen. 10? (Think about the book of Revelation)*

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<sup>183</sup> Gen. 12:2-3

<sup>184</sup> Rev. 18:4

<sup>185</sup> Chs. 17 & 18

### *Theme 11: Forfeited Salvation Means Judgment*

This theme is a spiritual axiom: it was as true in the time of Genesis as it is today. The word ‘judgment’ means ‘separation between two groups, parties, or possibilities’. In Greek the word *κρίσεις* (*kriseis*) is used, from which our word crisis is derived. A crisis means: ‘the passing from one situation (room or circumstance) to another’. In other words: when in a crisis you step over a threshold, leaving something behind and entering into something else.

Our task in missions is to announce salvation and acquaint people with the consequences of their choice – acceptance or rejection. Either they renounce their sins and are reconciled to God, or they cling to them and stay separated from Him.<sup>186</sup> Preaching the Gospel is indeed bringing people into a crisis: it leads them from the threshold of death to life and encourages them to take that step. Everyone finds himself in that predicament, whether he knows it or not. It is our task to make it known. That is why Jesus sent us to all nations.<sup>187</sup> It is not an option, as if we had a choice; it is an *urgent mission*. We see eight examples in Genesis:

In Gen. 3 *Adam and Eve* were warned not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They were told that the outcome would be a certain death. The message to the first human couple was different from the one to later humans: ‘You are safe now, but to keep safe, you should not eat of that tree.’ Later the message became: ‘You are spiritually dead. Unless you accept God’s salvation, you remain dead and are lost forever.’

The *next* example we see in Gen. 4. *Cain* is warned to master over the sin that tempted him. He did not listen, sinned, refused to repent and hardened his heart. He left the Lord’s presence.<sup>188</sup> So he became the founder of a Godless line of descendants. Such choice has eternal consequences. We do not know whether Cain physically heard God’s voice, but that does not matter: everybody can ‘hear’ God’s voice via his or her conscience. That is why Paul wrote that man has no excuse to keep on sinning.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Is. 59:1,2

<sup>187</sup> Matt. 28:18-20 & Acts 1:8

<sup>188</sup> Gen. 4:16

<sup>189</sup> Rom. 1:18-20

In the *example of Noah* we see that a whole generation had left God's ways<sup>190</sup> and was warned about a coming worldwide catastrophe as judgment over their sins. None except Noah's family believed and all others perished. The era of grace had been about a century<sup>191</sup> in which people could ponder Noah's message and repent. God was very merciful to wait so long. Would Noah's generation have repented if He had waited longer? Not likely!

The *fourth* example is seen in Gen. 11. The *peoples* of the earth resisted God's will for them (namely to scatter), so God interfered with a judgment that was more social than catastrophic: the language confusion forced them to spread out over the earth.

A good example is the *fifth*, in Gen. 18 & 19: the story of the destruction of *Sodom and Gomorrah*. God wanted to acquaint His friend Abraham with what He was about to do.<sup>192</sup> He, who is slow to anger,<sup>193</sup> investigated whether the Sodomites sinned as much as He had heard. Then He revealed His judgment plans to Abraham and allowed him to intercede for the cities. God went to the limit of His grace to honor Abraham's requests.<sup>194</sup>

Never before had God showed such respect for people, longing for their partnership in His business. He wants to bless, not destroy, and therefore inspires His 'watchmen' to intercede for the nations. When we accept that inspiration we may still save people from judgment. And although God carried out His judgment when only four – more or less – righteous people were found, He provided salvation for them. Even when judgments like natural disasters hit the world, we can be absolutely certain that God treats no one unjustly.

The *sixth* example we see in Gen. 21. *Ishmael* mocks Isaac, just as his mother had despised Sarah.<sup>195</sup> They were then sent away from Abraham's house.

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<sup>190</sup> Gen. 6:5,11-13

<sup>191</sup> Compare 5:32 with 7:11

<sup>192</sup> 18:17

<sup>193</sup> Is. 48:9

<sup>194</sup> Gen. 18:20,21,32

<sup>195</sup> 21:9 & 16:4 respectively

It has not been different throughout the ages and neither will it be at the end of time: when the sons of Ishmael mock the sons of Isaac they will face judgment. Remember that Genesis is the book of beginnings, where principles were planted that would apply throughout human history.

Example *seven* we see in *Esau's* life. The hatred for his brother Jacob, son of the promise, was only formally reconciled long after they separated,<sup>196</sup> but it lasted only for their life time and applied for their personal lives. The principles Esau had built into his life could never please God and he too set a pattern for his descendants. Often in Israel's history Esau's descendants gave Jacob's offspring a hard time<sup>197</sup> although they could never overpower them completely.

*Finally*, in Gen. 39-47 we see a worldwide *famine*. The Bible does not say *explicitly* that it was a judgment, but it should not surprise us when we look at Egypt's idolatry.<sup>198</sup> Yet, when judgment is necessary, God also provides a way of salvation.<sup>199</sup> Later we often see that famines are judgments over people's collective sins, e.g. in Judges and Ruth.<sup>200</sup> This was no coincidence. Only the people that went to Egypt benefited from Joseph's provisions and faced no starvation. All others perished, because they did not know or believe there was food in Egypt. Either they thought they could manage without Joseph, or that they would not be hit that hard. They are like all others today, who think they can be saved without Jesus.

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain the word 'crisis', also in a missionary context.*
2. *Explain why judgment came upon Cain and eventually on Noah's generation.*
3. *What was the nature of God's 'judgment' in Gen. 11?*
4. *When God has to execute judgment, what does He want His saints to do? (Think about Abraham and Moses)*

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<sup>196</sup> Ch. 33

<sup>197</sup> E.g. 2 Kings 8:20-22

<sup>198</sup> See chapter 3/1 'Moses & Pharaoh'

<sup>199</sup> Ps. 105:16-22

<sup>200</sup> Compare Judg. 21:25 and Ruth 1:1; see how the former caused the latter

## *Theme 12: The Stories of the Brothers*

In *Gen. 4* we see that Abel chose to follow God's ways and principles and Cain did not. He sinned and left God's presence.<sup>201</sup> Choices, made on earth, do not change when someone dies. Lewis described this principle vividly.<sup>202</sup> Earthly choices have eternal consequences.

In *Gen. 9* we read about Ham's sin, but not about repentance, and so he brought a curse over his descendants. A millennium later, seven peoples that descended from him were driven out of the country that God had promised to Abraham. It may look as if all descendants from Ham were predestined to damnation, but that is not the case. God is good, always searching whom He can save. Some individuals were saved: think about how Rahab joined Israel. Another was Ruth, from Moab, who was saved at her confession. Both women appear in Jesus' genealogy.<sup>203</sup> Converted Gentiles were equal to born Israelites. God's laws protected strangers in the midst of Israel.

*Gen. 13 & 19* is about Abraham and Lot, brothers in the faith. Lot's greed for wealth brought him down. He left the man of promise, Abraham, and the blessing. He lost almost everything: material possessions, his wife, his moral integrity, and was only just saved. Lot had received a warning:<sup>204</sup> he was taken captive by kings who waged war against Sodom. Abraham undertook a rescue mission: he brought Lot back to where he (Lot) had chosen to live.

If only Lot had recognized God's warning in this pre-judgment, he could have preached God's word to his fellow-citizens, or, if they would not repent, he could have left. His losses could then not have been as big as they were when the cities were destroyed later. This principle still applies today, personally and collectively. May we recognize God's correcting hand in our lives and nations, and act upon it lest something worse happens.<sup>205</sup>

The consequences of Lot's incest, resulting in the births of Moab and Ben-Ammi, ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites, were very significant. Both peoples

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<sup>201</sup> Gen. 4:16

<sup>202</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, 1946

<sup>203</sup> Josh. 2; 6:17,22-25; Ruth 1:16,17; Matt. 1:5

<sup>204</sup> Gen. 14

<sup>205</sup> Compare e.g. John 5:14

harassed Israel repeatedly in later centuries. It might not have happened, had Lot stayed with Abraham. One man's choice can have severe consequences for the nations.<sup>206</sup>

Ishmael (*Gen. 16 & 21*) didn't go along with his half-brother, son of the promise, Isaac; neither did their mothers. Hagar rebelled and later her son. As a result they had to be sent away. Had they submitted, they would have shared in the blessing. Rebellion leads to separation. God sanctioned this because of their heart-attitude towards Sarah and Isaac. Without repentance there could be no reconciliation.

Today we should pray for the *conversion* of the Ishmaelites (Arabs), most of whom are Muslims. The separation between Ishmael and Isaac resembles that between Christ's followers and unbelievers.<sup>207</sup> Without turning to Jesus there is no salvation for them. Animosity between Muslims, Jews and Christians on earth cannot continue in the hereafter. Ishmaelites have to conform to God's way of salvation in Christ. Otherwise they persist in their separation from God.

This applies to Jews as well. Neither Muslim nor Jew has to perish. Salvation is offered to them. But who will travel to their lands and tell them? We see hostility in many places, where Muslims persecute Christians as well as Jews. Only Jesus can break those hostile barriers down, and He *died to do so!* Jesus is the true Brother who gave His life, so that all can be reconciled to God and each other. Jesus Christ alone can do what no Palestinian-Jewish peace-agreement can ever do.<sup>208</sup>

Neither Jacob nor Esau (*Gen. 25 & 27-33*) was holy; both needed salvation. Their destination was determined by choice and behavior, not by God's 'pre'-destination.

*Esau* typifies carnal, nominal Christianity i.e. not being born again: he despised his birthright. He refused to live up to his parents' standards<sup>209</sup> and married Canaanite wives. He represents a form of Christianity that neither submits to Christ (typified by Isaac) nor to His Church (typified by Rebecca). Esau-Christianity makes its own laws, goes its own ways, which equal non-conformity to the way of salvation.

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<sup>206</sup> Gen. 19; See e.g. Numb. 22-25; 1 Sam. 11; Ez. 22:30

<sup>207</sup> Gal. 4:21-31

<sup>208</sup> Gen. 25:18; Eph. 2:11-18

<sup>209</sup> Gen. 26:34,35; 27:46; 28:6-8

*Jacob* represents a form of Christianity that at first differed little from his brother's, but on whom the promise rested and whose faith at last matured after God's dealings with him. The older was to serve (submit to) the younger. Had Esau been obedient to God's word, he would have been blessed too, but he was indifferent and thought about life on earth only.<sup>210</sup> He refused to submit and separation came.

We see that natural birth does not guarantee a spiritual inheritance; only promise does. Nobody can claim spiritual birthright based on natural birth, e.g. in a Christian family, church or culture. God has no grandchildren. One only becomes God's child by rebirth. Therefore, the oldest never inherited the promise but the younger did. Spiritually, only our 'youngest life', the new identity in Christ, inherits eternal life. Our old(est) life cannot please God. Esau-religion will not see God's Kingdom.<sup>211</sup>

The separation between Joseph and his brothers (*Gen. 37-47*) shows who made it to the throne and saved the land, while the others did not. The latter needed to be saved and never ruled, although each became founder of a tribe, named after them.

In *Gen. 42-45* Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. We recognize Zechariah's words: the brothers weeping about the one they thought they killed,<sup>212</sup> as one day the Jews will weep over Jesus, recognizing Him at His return.

Joseph told his brothers to bring their youngest brother; or they would not see him again. Jesus told us the same: 'But first the Gospel ... must be preached in the whole world ... and *then* the end will come'.<sup>213</sup> The end will not come, at His Return, until all the families of the earth have heard the Gospel. Not until we bring in the last brother will we see Him again.

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<sup>210</sup> 32:22-32; 25:23,27,32,34b; 27:40

<sup>211</sup> John 1:12,13; 3:3,5-7; Rom. 8:8

<sup>212</sup> Gen. 45:3,4,14,15; Zech. 12:10b

<sup>213</sup> Compare Gen. 44:23 with Matt. 24:14 (*italics mine*)

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain why there was separation between Cain & Abel.*
2. *Explain the utmost consequence of Ham's sin.*
3. *Explain why separation occurred between Abraham & Lot.*
4. *Explain why Hagar & Ishmael had to be sent away from Abraham's family.*
5. *Explain the typology in Isaac's family (Isaac, Rebecca, Esau & Jacob).*
6. *Explain how the sending for Benjamin and Joseph making himself known to his brothers, typifies the return of Christ.*

## Chapter II

### Missiological Observations

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter we simply continue with where the book of Genesis flows into the book of Exodus. Therefore, the main character of this book, Moses, is the subject of the *first* of these six observations. He returns in the next two chapters as well.

The *second* observation deals with the book of Ruth. Here we learn of the significance of Gentiles – women even! – in the genealogy of Christ.

In the *Psalms* we have the best proof that God is the God of the nations, already in the Old Testament times, when most knew Him only as the God of Israel.

Few people may have realized that remarkable lessons for missionaries can be found in the book of Ecclesiastes. That is the topic of our *fourth* observation.

A character in itself is Jonah, from whose book some humbling lessons can be learned. If you doubted whether cross-cultural missions took place in the Old Testament, here's an example.

And that was not the only one: 2½ thousand years ago, God presented us with a proven method for cross-cultural missionary training, when He gave us the story of Daniel and his friends!

## 1. *Moses, a Great Sent One*

The book of Exodus<sup>214</sup> tells of the Israelites, enslaved by Egyptian oppressors, on their way out of Egypt. God liberated them with signs and wonders. This story spoke to oppressed people throughout the ages, but was also abused. Violence was seen as a means to freedom. Moses' life belies this interpretation.

Persecution leads to growth,<sup>215</sup> personally, collectively, qualitatively and quantitatively. It was true for the Israelites as it is for today's Church: we see much church growth in e.g. China and Sudan. As surely as God liberated His people from Egypt, so He does for His oppressed people today. It may take longer than we would like but He will do justice His way and in His time, bypassing violent Moseses, who take up weapons. He acts in the spirit of Jesus, Who came to save, not to destroy.<sup>216</sup>

Egypt's slavery is an image of the world, subjugated to devil and demons, which are always ready to steal, kill and destroy.<sup>217</sup> Moses, Israel's savior, was born in the midst of his people, like Jesus, the world's Savior, was born among His people. An attempt on Moses' life was made as happened to Jesus, when Herod killed the children of Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt with Jesus, where they lived as foreigners, just like Moses fled to Midian where he sojourned as foreigner.<sup>218</sup>

God heard the cry of His oppressed people and acted, but by human standards it took a long time. The delay was because the Amorites' measure of unrighteousness was not yet full.<sup>219</sup> God's late judgment was an act of mercy towards the Gentiles, *for which His people had to suffer*. This is hard to understand, but Paul sheds light on it by saying that he filled up in his flesh

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<sup>214</sup> From two Greek words (*εξοδος*): 'ex' (= out of) and 'hodos' (= way, or road): i.e. the way out

<sup>215</sup> Ex. 1:12

<sup>216</sup> Luke 9:51-56

<sup>217</sup> John 10:10

<sup>218</sup> Compare Ex. 2:15 with Matt. 2:13-18 and Jer. 31:15; Ex. 2:22

<sup>219</sup> Gen. 15:16; Dan. 11:36

what still lacked in Christ's afflictions.<sup>220</sup> It is a biblical given, that *no salvation will be obtained without someone suffering for it*.

Eighty years before Israel's delivery God prepared the way by having Moses born. He was the chosen sent one, which he may have learned by revelation. At first he used violence and murder, but had to learn that this is not God's way. Zechariah said later: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord'.<sup>221</sup> This spiritual law rejects violent liberation movements and a liberation-theology that preaches this. Liberation for Israel might have come forty years earlier, had Moses not blown it. The shortest way to salvation is to let God have His way instead of 'working justice' your self.

Moses learned patience tending sheep. Through that humiliation<sup>222</sup> he became 'the meekest man on earth'.<sup>223</sup> Some things we only learn through suffering, which was even true for Jesus.<sup>224</sup> Only by virtue of Godly character could Moses later lead two million people for forty years through the desert, most of whom rebelled and complained.

When God called Moses he tended the flock. We see *firstly*, that no idler is called to God's work. He called leaders from their professions, like Joseph, Saul, David and Elisha. *Secondly*, God trains people according to the way in which they should go.<sup>225</sup> Moses, used to bleating sheep, qualified to lead murmuring Israelites. He knew the desert and so could be their guide. Leaders, who meet God in their desert of suffering and humiliation, qualify to lead their followers through similar deserts as examples of faith and trust in God. After Moses' desert years he must have lost his ideals, drive and vision. He had learned not to trust in his own capacities, of which he was so confident before.

God used a burning bush that was not consumed by fire to draw Moses' attention. As if He wanted to say: 'Moses, this is how you were aflame once for My people. *You* think your fuel is spent, but I show you here, that for a long time still you will burn with My passion without being consumed'.

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<sup>220</sup> Col. 1:24

<sup>221</sup> Zech. 4:6

<sup>222</sup> Gen. 46:34b

<sup>223</sup> Numb. 12:3

<sup>224</sup> Heb. 5:8

<sup>225</sup> Prov. 22:6

Moses, the reluctant ‘who am I’ needed to meet the Great I AM before his mission could start. The words ‘go’ and ‘I am with you’ remind us of Jesus’ words.<sup>226</sup>

So, Moses became the major sent one for the Exodus, in spite of his arguments for God to send someone else. God added Aaron, promising to help both of them speak, just like Jesus later sent His disciples two by two. He too, promised to help them speak.<sup>227</sup>

Then God wanted to kill Moses. Why would He prepare someone for so long, and then just prior to his mission want to kill him? Had it been the devil we would understand; *he* wanted Israel to stay in Egypt and would have loved to kill Moses. But the outcome suggests differently. After Moses’ wife circumcised their son, God left Moses alive.<sup>228</sup> He had to bring his family life in order before he could do God’s work. He could not *preach* God’s covenant<sup>229</sup> without *practicing* it. Whoever broke God’s covenant by *not* being circumcised would be cut off from His people. This would have happened, had Zipporah not acted. Even if we are called and trained, and received power and authority, but do *not* practice what we preach, He *won’t* use us!

In Mark we see another parallel to Moses’ mission. He was to speak and perform miracles.<sup>230</sup> God adds deeds to His Word, as does Jesus, sending *us*.<sup>231</sup>

The prophet like Moses,<sup>232</sup> whom God would raise up, is Jesus. Moses needed forty *years* in the desert before he could liberate the Israelites. Jesus went through forty *days* of temptation, prayer and fasting in the desert, before He delivered His people from Satan’s power.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Compare Ex. 3:10,12 & 4:12 with Matt. 28:19,20

<sup>227</sup> Ex. 4:13; Luke 21:15; John 14:26

<sup>228</sup> Ex. 4:24,26

<sup>229</sup> Gen. 17:7-14

<sup>230</sup> Ex. 4:28; Mark 16:15,17,18

<sup>231</sup> John 14:12; 20:21

<sup>232</sup> Deut. 18:15,18; Acts 3:22; 7:37

<sup>233</sup> Matt. 4:1-11

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain the name of the book Exodus.*
2. *Give examples of church growth and mention the main reason for it.*
3. *Give the typological meanings of Egypt, Pharaoh, the taskmasters, and Moses.*
4. *Give an OT and a NT example of why no salvation takes place without someone suffering for it.*
5. *Which two experiences qualified Moses to lead Israel?*
6. *Explain why God was about to kill Moses.*

## 2. *Ruth, a Gentile Bride*

Ruth's story took place in the time of the Judges.<sup>234</sup> This beautiful little book is like an oasis of spiritual comfort in the midst of national crisis and turbulence. The famine referred to, may well have been in the time of Gideon.<sup>235</sup>

Naomi grants us some insight in Israel's spiritual condition in those famine-days, by her attitude and words. She reacted, as many do today, without understanding for the *national* reasons behind it. Naomi thought *individually* rather than *collectively*. She had, in her opinion, not sinned *personally* and therefore did not see why she should be victim of the *national* sinful condition.

Many people in Western societies also forget that they are part of a world that suffers under a great weight of sin – whether they are personally responsible for it or not.

Naomi struggled with misunderstood human suffering. She concluded that God had not treated her fairly, reacted with bitterness and hardened her heart against Him,<sup>236</sup> so that she actually 'anti-evangelized'.<sup>237</sup> Because of the famine she and her family had gone to Moab,<sup>238</sup> showing a conviction that it did not matter whether you belonged to God's people, as long as you had food to eat. Neither did she care about a God who, again in her opinion, had left His people. Why would she advocate Him in front of her daughters-in-law?<sup>239</sup> Her sons had intermarried with Gentile women, apparently also without her protest.<sup>240</sup>

An interesting aspect in this book is that the Lord does not say anything Himself; He only appears in the sense that people speak *about* Him. That He is the One who guides events from behind the scenes, is obvious from the moment that

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<sup>234</sup> Ruth 1:1

<sup>235</sup> Judges 6:3-5,11

<sup>236</sup> Ruth 1:3-5,11-13

<sup>237</sup> 1:20,21

<sup>238</sup> 1:2

<sup>239</sup> 1:11-15

<sup>240</sup> Deut. 7:3; Judges 3:6

Naomi and Ruth (re)-entered Israel, as the barley harvest was beginning.<sup>241</sup> This tells us that, whether God speaks or not, He does not abandon His plans, nor does He forsake His people – in spite of the fact that they may misunderstand Him or become bitter and indifferent about Him.

Naomi represents nominal Christianity, which loses its fire when disappointments are experienced due to a lack of spiritual insight and unmet expectations. She had become hostile and bitter and even suggested that this is what her name should be from then on – Mara.<sup>242</sup> Her bitterness became her adopted identity. She also represents today's part of the church that has lost all missionary zeal; a church that has fossilized because it failed to evangelize. It was only later, in the next chapter, when she found the Lord was blessing her again, that a revival took place in her heart and that she could praise Him again.<sup>243</sup>

We see for the first time that a Gentile lady, Ruth, understood so much about Israel's God that she happily left her gods behind in Moab to join Him and His people. In the process, with her beautiful confession of faith<sup>244</sup> and her magnificent attitude,<sup>245</sup> she brought Naomi back to the faith as well.

Boaz is called the 'kinsman-redeemer',<sup>246</sup> who did not only redeem the property that belonged to Naomi's late husband, but also married Ruth. We see that the redeemer (and at the same time 'the lord of the harvest') married a Gentile bride and so became a type of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, who is also obtaining a Bride from Gentile nations.

After all, Ruth, a Gentile and Boaz, a half-Canaanite because Rahab was his mother,<sup>247</sup> established an ethnic link in the Messianic family line. Boaz became the great-grandfather of King David<sup>248</sup> and Jesus Christ

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<sup>241</sup> Ruth 1:22b

<sup>242</sup> 1:20

<sup>243</sup> 2:20

<sup>244</sup> 1:16,17

<sup>245</sup> 2:2,7,10,13,17,18,23

<sup>246</sup> 2:20; 3:9

<sup>247</sup> Matt. 1:5

<sup>248</sup> Ruth 4:17,22

was born centuries later from this Davidic line. This shows that Jesus Christ would be the Messiah for *all nations*. Here we see the main missiological significance of this book.

There is an interesting relationship between the books of *Ruth* (where God does not speak) and *Esther* (in which He is not even mentioned). In *Ruth* we see this lady of *Gentile* descent, together with Boaz, become a link in the Messianic family line, in the midst of the *Jewish* people. In the book of *Esther* we see this Queen of *Jewish* descent in the midst of the *Gentiles* secure and save the people to which that family line belonged, about seven centuries later. This family line was of utmost importance because in His name the *nations* will put their hope.<sup>249</sup>

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain why Naomi thought she should not have to suffer.*
2. *What wrong attitude towards suffering did Naomi display?*
3. *What was the consequence of that attitude?*
4. *What do we learn about God's guidance in this book?*
5. *Explain of what or who Naomi, Ruth and Boaz are types.*
6. *Explain the relationship between the books of Ruth and Esther.*

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<sup>249</sup> Is. 11:10; 42:1,4; Matt. 12:18,21; Rom. 15:12

### 3. *Psalms*

It is not hard to spot missionary themes in the Psalms – there are many – but ordering them logically is, because most are not written in story-form. To make the mission themes more visible, I use the ordering we discussed in Genesis, but with references rather than with descriptions, for brevity's sake.<sup>250</sup> One will not need much time to page through them, after which a thorough understanding of mission themes in the Psalms remains.

Putting the verses into the categories of the twelve themes is partly a matter of interpretation. There are overlaps, especially between 5 & 11 and 9 & 11. Some have only one or a few references (e.g. 1, 2, 4, 6-8, 10 & 12); the remaining (3, 5, 9 & 11) have many.

Not all Psalms contain verses that can be categorized under any of the themes, e.g. 1; 3; 15; 17; 19; 20; 23; 29; 35; 42; 43; 55; 61; 84; 88; 90; 93; 112; 120-124; 131 & 134. These are not 'un-missionary' but have a different emphasis.

Another property of the book is its prophetic caliber, expressed mainly in its messianic<sup>251</sup> and apocalyptic<sup>252</sup> verses. Observing these provides us with missiological truths as well, because Christ Himself is the greatest missionary.

*Theme 1 (Who sends?)* shows God, sending Jesus to be King (2:6); commissioning man to be steward over creation (8:6); calling David from behind the sheep (78:70) and installing him into office under divine protection (89:20-24). In 104:30a God sends His Spirit with creative power and in 105:17 & 20 He sends Joseph to Egypt. Sometimes the lines between David and his great Son Jesus are thin: in 89:25-29 we see a wider, Messianic perspective.

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<sup>250</sup> Please accept my apologies for the many Scripture references within the text, instead of footnotes, just for once.

<sup>251</sup> *Messianic* value is found in Ps. 2; 22; 40:6-10; 41:9; 45; 47:5; 55:1-5, 12-14; 56:5,6; 68:18; 69:8,9,21; 72; 80:17; 89:27-29; 102:21,22; 109:2-5; 110; 118:22,26 and 147:3

<sup>252</sup> *Apocalyptic* value is seen in Ps. 2:1-3; 46; 48:4-7; 75:2,3,8; 83:1-8; 96:13a; 102:16,26; 110:3a,5,6 and 144:4-8

*Theme 2 (To do what?)* is seen in that Jesus and the Church are assigned to intercede for and rule over the nations (2:8,9; 18:43b) and in man's mandate of stewardship over the earth (8:6-8). Some texts remind us of the great commission: 9:11b; 71:15-18; 73:28b. The description of David's calling we see in 78:71,72 & 89:26; Joseph's in 105:19,21,22 and Israel's in 105:45 & 106:8. The Holy Spirit is sent on a renewal-mission (104:30b). Two general principles of working for the Lord become visible: 126:5,6 (sowing in tears, reaping with joy) and 127:1 (unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain).

*Theme 3 (Man's sin problem)* has many references: 2:2,3; 7:14-16; 10:2-11; 12:2; 14:1,3; 32:3,4; 36:1-4; 38:1-8; 40:12; 52:1-4; 53:1,3; 58:3-5; 64:3-6; 69:5; 73:6-11; 78:8-11,17-19,32,36,37,40-43,56,57; 94:4-7; 106:6,7,13-18,21,22,24-27,29,32,33; 107:10-12,17,18; 119:133b; 130:3; 139:19-22; 140:1-5; 143:3.

*Theme 4 (The origin of sin)* can be seen in 109:6. An evil man is appointed as accuser. This reminds us of Satan, as he is described in Job 1 & 2, Zech. 3:1,2 and Rev. 12:9,10. It is the only Psalm verse where the veil surrounding the evil one is lifted briefly.

*Theme 5 (God's solution for the sin problem)* gives us many references. Included are texts where sinners cry out to God for help, mercy, deliverance and justice: 2:10-12; 4:5 (+ Rom. 12:1); 6:9; 13:5; 14:5b; 16:11a; 25:7-11,15,19; 26:11b; 27:1a; 28:8; 30:8,10; 31:15,16; 32:5,6a; 34:22; 37:27,28a,39,40; 38:18; 41:4; 49:5a,15; 50:14,15,23; 51:1-17; 53:6; 54:1-4,7; 56:13; 60:4; 62:1,2,5-8; 65:3; 68:19,20; 69:13; 70:4; 74:12; 78:34,35,38a; 79:8,9; 80:3,7,19; 81:8-10,13,14,16; 82:3-5; 85:4-7,9; 90:14-16; 98:1; 99:8; 101:2-4; 103:3,4a,8-12; 106:3,23,30,31,44; 107:13,14,16,19,20; 116:8,16b; 118:14,21; 119 (almost complete); 128:1,4; 129:4; 130:7,8; 135:14; 138:7; 139:24; 140:6,7,12; 141:3-5,8,9; 142:5-7; 143:1,2,6-12; 144:10,11,15; 146:5; 147:11; 148:14 and 149:4. We see that God's solution for our sin problem becomes a reality when we cry out to Him and *choose to obey Him*.

*Theme 6 (Man's solution for the sin problem)* is seen in 33:16,17; 49:5b-9,12-14,20 and 52:7. But man's solutions are no solutions at all: *man cannot save himself*.

*Theme 7 (God's covenant with the son of promise)* can be found in 2:7b-9 (where rule over the nations is promised) and in 33:12 (Israel as heir among the nations). More general references are: 80:17; 89:30-34; 103:17,18; 106:45,46; and 111:5b,9. The Davidic covenant is referred to in 89:3,4,35-37 & 132:10-12,17,18; the Patriarchal covenant in 105:8-11,42.

*Theme 8 (God's universalistic purpose):* 33:11; 64:9,10; 65:2; 66:1,4; 96:1-3; 110:5; 145:18.

*Theme 9 (The Nations)* dominates. Included are texts about 'all the earth', 'all generations', etc. Israel is placed in contrast with the nations, first in blessing, later in being scattered among them (e.g. 44:2,11,14; 79:1-3). Verses about Gentile nations sometimes speak of blessings, sometimes of judgment. You can make out the distinctions by looking up: 2:1,2,8-10; 7:7,8a; 9:5,8; 18:47,49; 22:27,28,30,31; 24:1; 33:8,10; 44:2,11,14; 45:17; 46:10; 47:1-3,7-9; 48:10a; 49:1,2; 50:1,4; 56:7; 57:5,9,11; 59:13a; 60:7,8; 65:5b-8a; 66:8; 67 (complete); 68:31,32; 69:34; 72:8-11,17,19; 76:11b,12; 77:14b; 78:55; 79:1-3,6,10; 80:8; 82:8; 83:18; 86:9; 87:4-7; 94:10a; 96:1-3,7-10,13; 97:1,5b,6,9; 98:2-4,7b,9; 99:1,2; 100:1; 102:15,22; 105:1,6,44; 106:34,35,47; 107:3; 108:3,5,8,9; 110:5,6; 111:6; 113:3,4,6; 114:7; 115:2; 117:1; 118:10; 126:2b; 135:10-12; 136:17-22; 137:7; 138:4,5; 145:12; 148:11; 149:6-9; 150:6.

*Theme 10 (The principle of Babel)* is found in many verses that do not refer to Babylon itself (except for 137:8), but to all sorts of idolatry and rebellion. These are: 2:1-3 (a prophetic preview of apocalyptic Babylon in its worldwide rebellion, Rev. 17 & 18); Ps. 4:2b; 16:4; 78:58; 81:9; 96:5a; 97:7; 106:19,20,28,36-39; 115:4-8; 135:15-18.

*Theme 11 (Forfeited salvation means judgment)* is almost as well represented as Theme 5: 2:12; 5:10b; 9:15,17,19,20; 10:16; 11:6; 21:8-12; 28:4,5; 31:17b,18; 31:23; 34:16,21; 36:12; 37:1,2,9a,10,12,14,17,20,22b,28b,35,36,38; 39:11a; 50:16-22; 52:5; 53:5; 54:5; 56:7; 58:6-11; 59:5,8,12,13a; 63:9-11b; 64:7,8; 68:1,2,21,30; 69:27,28; 73:18-20,27; 74:1-9 (Israel's exile), 19,20a; 75:7; 78:21,22,30,31,33,44-51,59-64; 79:10b,12; 81:11,12,15; 82:2,7; 83:9-17; 92:6,7,9; 94:2,3,23; 95:8-11; 97:3; 101:5,7,8; 105:28-36; 106:40-43; 107:33,34; 110:5,6; 112:10; 119:21,118,119,155; 125:3,5; 129:5,6; 140:8-11; 141:6,7,10; 145:20b and 146:9b.

*Theme 12 (The Brothers)* is best seen in Ps. 133.

*Study Questions*

1. Which four of the twelve missionary themes are dominant in the Psalms?
2. The sending of which four personalities do we see in the Psalms?
3. In which one Psalm verse do we see a type of Satan?
4. Verses about Gentile nations sometimes speak of ... sometimes of ...

#### 4. *Ecclesiastes*

In Ecclesiastes we see almost another Solomon than the one who wrote Proverbs.<sup>253</sup> The latter he wrote at the zenith of his career; the former when he was old, and it breathes the atmosphere of a man writing his memoirs. He observes meaninglessness because he only looks at temporary, material things. He just uses his five senses. All pleasures and achievements only provided a meaningless reward because they were separated from eternal values.<sup>254</sup>

He speaks about the heavy burden that God has laid on man; how different from the easy yoke Jesus offers.<sup>255</sup> The result is despair and his reaction one of *carpe diem* – an enjoy-the-day-mentality.<sup>256</sup> Some understanding dawns on him when God enters the scene briefly.<sup>257</sup>

One moment he recognizes man's eternal value, the next he compares him with animals;<sup>258</sup> quite different from how David described man.<sup>259</sup> Man's highest goal, according to Solomon, is happiness.<sup>260</sup> This is humanistic hedonism, not Godly wisdom, because it places man in the center. Pain and suffering generate severe pessimism because they are not being explained from an eternal perspective.<sup>261</sup>

Suddenly true wisdom reappears<sup>262</sup> ('two are better than one') whether it applies to friends, married couples or missionary teams. It is obvious: when he writes about God, there is wisdom in his words; when he turns his eyes away from Him, despair and hopelessness hit.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> E.g. Eccl. 1:17 & 2:15

<sup>254</sup> 2:10,11,14b, 16

<sup>255</sup> Compare Ecc. 1:1b with e.g. Matt. 11:30

<sup>256</sup> Eccl. 2:20,24

<sup>257</sup> 2:25

<sup>258</sup> Compare 3:11 with 3:18-21

<sup>259</sup> Ps. 8:4-8

<sup>260</sup> Eccl. 3:22

<sup>261</sup> Compare e.g. 4:1-3 with Rom. 8:28

<sup>262</sup> Eccl. 4:9-12

<sup>263</sup> Compare 5:1-7 with 5:8-17

The ‘gift of God’ (material enjoyment, according to Solomon) seems to be the only pleasant thing in life. How empty and un-biblical this view is.<sup>264</sup>

His message of despair and hopelessness goes on for another chapter (6). Chs. 7 & 10 remind us of Proverbs in style but sometimes lack its profoundness and caliber.<sup>265</sup> He shows that also in similar other statements.<sup>266</sup> These cannot be considered Godly wisdom because they contradict the spirit of the Gospel.<sup>267</sup> Solomon’s wisdom faded because of his idolatry, following his marriages with many Gentile women.<sup>268</sup>

In chapter 8 he does say that God-fearing people will be better off, but this knowledge does not seem to comfort him; for Solomon it all boils down to the fact that life is meaningless because man cannot understand it.<sup>269</sup> That is logical when you do not take into consideration the life to come and its eternal perspectives. He even said ‘everything *to come* is meaningless’.<sup>270</sup> Man may not understand the meaning of (his) life; God does.<sup>271</sup> Despair is heard: God has everything for the righteous and wise in His hand. But who *is* He? Can He be trusted? ‘He is so unpredictable’, Solomon seems to say.<sup>272</sup>

This conclusion can only come from one who neither knows the all-good character of God, nor the all-evil character of the devil, and thus attributes both to the same source, which he calls ‘God’. The devil is in hiding, an invisible foe who was not reckoned with. Because of this limited insight it looks as if everybody undergoes the same fate; if there is no eternal reward or punishment (‘love, hate and jealousy vanish’) then there can be only one ‘gospel’ which says: enjoy life and don’t bother about meaning.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Compare 5:18-20 e.g. with 1 Cor. 15:58; Col. 3:23,24 or Heb. 11:23-26

<sup>265</sup> E.g. that ‘money is a shelter’ and ‘good for everything’, 7:12 & 10:19c

<sup>266</sup> E.g. that his life is meaningless (7:15) or that he did not find one upright woman among a thousand (7:28)

<sup>267</sup> E.g. 1 Tim. 6:10,11; Eph. 2:10 and Rom. 16:1-4,6,12a respectively

<sup>268</sup> Some of the pain this brought we see reflected in 7:26 ‘I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare’

<sup>269</sup> Eccl. 8:12,17

<sup>270</sup> 11:8b, italics mine

<sup>271</sup> Is. 55:8,9

<sup>272</sup> Eccl. 9:1

<sup>273</sup> 9:2-9

Just as he said before: when you enjoy yourself you will not reflect on your days and be tortured by its apparent meaninglessness.<sup>274</sup> He denies the reality of a life-to-come.<sup>275</sup>

Later, Paul said something entirely different: ‘then we will know fully...’.<sup>276</sup> Solomon saw no divine guidance: ‘time and *chance happen* to all’.<sup>277</sup> The realization that judgment is to come<sup>278</sup> – with either reward or punishment – was no determining factor in Solomon’s life.

A beautiful parable suddenly pops up as an evangelical gem in the midst of all this despair.<sup>279</sup> The poor wise man represents Jesus, who can save the little city (the world) from the oppression of the great king (the devil). The saved inhabitants (ungrateful humanity) then forget about Him.

We do see some missionary principles in the dynamic of sowing and reaping, the rebuke not to look for excuses not to work, and the encouragement to not give up.<sup>280</sup>

I described the philosophy behind Ecclesiastes because it shows some dynamics of semi-religious humanistic thinking, a belief-system often found in First World countries. The growing number of Developing World missionaries who minister there, justifies an explanation of this way of thinking, so that they can see through the pitfalls of unbelief, materialism and sometimes even prosperity-teaching that this worldview contains. Their views on the invisible world as well as their biblical concept of God must be heard again. The emptiness of the ‘gospel’ of Ecclesiastes, often preached in the West, must be replaced again by the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>274</sup> 5:20

<sup>275</sup> 9:10

<sup>276</sup> 1 Cor. 13:12

<sup>277</sup> Eccl. 9:11b,12 (*italics mine*)

<sup>278</sup> 12:14

<sup>279</sup> 9:13-16

<sup>280</sup> 11:1,2,4 and 6 respectively

### *Study Questions*

1. *What is Solomon's main weakness, recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes?*
2. *What did Solomon consider the highest goal in life?*
3. *Why did Solomon's wisdom fade, later in his life?*
4. *Describe Solomon's vision on the future.*
5. *Why did Solomon attribute good and evil to the same source?*
6. *Which missionary principles do we see in the book (include the reference)?*
7. *Why is it important to understand Ecclesiastes, for missionaries from the Developing World that are being sent out to Western countries?*

## 5. *Jonah, Cross-cultural Missionary Against All Odds*

The unique, fascinating story of Jonah teaches us *different aspects* of missions. 'Jonah' means 'dove' – a meek, peaceful animal – and the crux of his story seems to be the turning of a rebel into a man of compassion. Apparently, the book is more about God's work *in* man than His work *through* man. Like Jonah, God wants *us* to *be* (a Godly person) before we can *do* (His work properly). Why had Jonah become such a difficult man?

There were different reasons. Jonah had received a word from God for king Jeroboam II,<sup>281</sup> like: 'King, retake your territory from the Arameans! I empower you to do so. Go, take what belongs to Israel!' Jeroboam acted upon that word and reclaimed the territory from the Syrians.<sup>282</sup> That established Jonah's reputation at the court and caused a nationalistic attitude in his thinking with regard to defeating Israel's enemies. During his life-time Syrian influence had decreased, but a more powerful enemy now loomed at the horizon. The Assyrian Empire had built up power and its threat became real in Jonah's day. No wonder that he, used to friend-foe thinking, refused to proclaim God's salvation to them. In Jonah's opinion, enemies were to be beaten, not blessed. Why bless a danger towards Israel? His loyalty, sympathy and compassion only applied to Israel but God wanted to create more space *for the nations* in Jonah's heart.

Jonah's role in missions is still not popular because we too, tend to shrink away from vocations that call us to countries that have poverty, disease, rough terrain, extreme climates, and the threat of persecution or lack of comfort.<sup>283</sup> Do we understand why God challenged Jonah's 'political' theology? And is it not equally hard for Him today to thrust forth laborers into His harvest?<sup>284</sup> Jonah needed to be kicked into the right direction; as do we sometimes!

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<sup>281</sup> Jeroboam II ruled from 793-753 BC

<sup>282</sup> 2 Kings 14:23-25

<sup>283</sup> Maybe the 10-40 Window for today's missionaries can be compared with what Assyria meant to Jonah?

<sup>284</sup> Matt. 9:38 The Greek word in that text for 'thrust forth' is *εξβαλλω* (*exballoo*), 'to kick out'

God assigns duties to His laborers, but what if they disobey? Does He fire them? On the contrary: He showed compassion to Jonah, wanting *him* to learn to display compassion to others. We don't know whether he ever did. Important is that we don't make the same mistakes.

God took ten steps to bring Jonah back to obedience: He sent a storm on the sea (1:4); the Gentile (!) captain of the ship called Jonah to prayer (1:6); Jonah was found guilty by the dice (1:7); he was interrogated by the sailors (1:8); he had to explain his sins to God in front of unbelievers (1:9,10); he had to plead guilty (1:12); he was shamed by the prayers of the Gentiles (1:14); he had to undergo God's uncomfortable ride back in a fish (1:17); and although he learned to pray again, he failed to confess his sin (2:1-10). Finally, he obeyed his original assignment (3:1-3).

However, choosing to be obedient did not mean that Jonah was now convinced of his wrong attitude or that he retook his original assignment willingly. It is remarkable, that God arranged circumstances to fit His goals: He sent a storm, then a fish that was to return Jonah to land. Once Jonah was in Assyria, God's display of power continued by providing a vine, a worm and an east wind.<sup>285</sup> All events were meant to get Jonah to where God wanted him to be. What a beautiful picture of how God guides His children, and such an assurance that He is willing to go the same lengths to lead *us* to Christ-likeness!

Unwillingly, the run-away missionary had become a witness to the nations by telling Gentile sailors about his God, causing them to pray and to bring sacrifices,<sup>286</sup> and showing them by example that it is better for one man to die than the whole people to perish.<sup>287</sup> And so, even in his disobedience, Jonah became a *type of Christ*. Jesus recognized this later when He compared His three days in the grave with Jonah's three days in the belly of the fish.<sup>288</sup> Becoming a *type* of Jesus, beautiful as it is, is not God's ultimate goal; becoming *like* Jesus is. We see God working at that in Jonah's life throughout the book. Jonah also typifies the people of Israel in their failing witness to the nations.

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<sup>285</sup> Jonah 4:6-8

<sup>286</sup> 1:14-16

<sup>287</sup> Compare with John 18:14;

<sup>288</sup> Matt. 12:40

When he finally started his 900 km walk towards Nineveh – a desert trip of five weeks – he was still not in the mood to preach the God he knew so well.<sup>289</sup> He decided for a hell-and-damnation approach,<sup>290</sup> with a positive result he had *not* desired. He did have a good God-image: if only he had believed with his heart what he confessed with mouth!

God wanted Jonah to intercede, just like Abraham, praying for Sodom or Moses, praying for Israel.<sup>291</sup> This would have turned him into a meek man. In spite of his un-prayerful and bad-attitude preaching, the whole city repented in sackcloth and ashes with prayer and fasting.

But God did not give up on His uncompassionate servant: in their dialogues the contrast between the three times ‘but Jonah...’<sup>292</sup> and three times ‘but the Lord’ or ‘but God’<sup>293</sup> is vividly expressed. The sad end of Jonah’s story is that he apparently hardened his heart.<sup>294</sup> He had become used to hardening because he had not humbled himself by confessing his earlier disobedience.<sup>295</sup>

The last we see of him is the ‘Elijah syndrome’<sup>296</sup>: he wanted to die after his assignment was over. Jonah shows us that whoever allows the poison of moaning in his life usually continues in that attitude. Maybe, God sometimes has bigger headaches in bringing His children to obedience, than in reaching the Gentiles with the gospel!

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<sup>289</sup> Jonah 4:2

<sup>290</sup> 3:4

<sup>291</sup> Gen. 18:16-33 and Ex. 32:7-14, 30-34 respectively

<sup>292</sup> Jonah 1:3,5; 4:1

<sup>293</sup> 4:4,9,10

<sup>294</sup> 4:1-9

<sup>295</sup> 2:1-10

<sup>296</sup> 1 Kings 19:4

### *Study Questions*

1. *What was one of God's most important goals with Jonah?*
2. *Explain why Jonah had become so nationalistic in his thinking.*
3. *Did Jonah repent of his refusal to go to Nineveh?*
4. *What was the consequence of this?*
5. *In what way can we see Jonah as a type of Christ?*
6. *In what way did Jonah not look like Abraham or Moses?*

## 6. *Missionary Training in Babylonia*

From Daniel's life we learn many missionary principles. We see that the Lord can turn adverse circumstances into a missionary vocation. Often He calls missionaries without them realizing it at first. Godly upbringing can be the privilege that leads to a missionary career. Daniel shows that missionary functionality starts with living a holy life, that Christian character and attitude are indispensable on the field and that good cross-cultural training best takes place in the host country.

Ashpenaz explained to the young Hebrews, some of royal descent, what program would be followed to turn them into good Babylonians. They were to be fed the best food from the royal table and language studies were to be started immediately; literature studies were added later. They had to understand what life in Babylonia was all about.

Four of these youngsters asked permission to eat a diet of vegetables and fruit. Daniel & friends resolved to not defile themselves with the royal food and drink. They spoke to Ashpenaz privately and explained their requests. Daniel proposed a ten-day probation period. Ashpenaz gave the boys the benefit of the doubt, which he did not regret.<sup>297</sup>

Before the deportation to Babylon they grew up in God-fearing families, in contrast to the surrounding idolatry. They learned to read the scrolls of Moses and the prophets, which their fathers and rabbis had explained to them. When they were thirteen they had passed through the bar-mitzvah ritual, and were considered adults thereafter. Each had vowed to serve God for the rest of their lives. They had heard Jeremiah preach, warning about an exile to Babylonia. Now they knew what that meant....

Language learning was heavy. They had to learn another alphabet, but young minds and determination helped them over the hassles. They understood that learning the local language well would benefit them, and that it might enable them to tell the Babylonians the stories of their people, e.g. how God delivered them from Egypt. Little did they realize that later God had to save *them* from the idolatrous ordeals of *Babylon*.

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<sup>297</sup> Dan. 1:3,4,6,8,12,14,15

Ashpenaz took the integration process seriously: he gave them Babylonian names. Daniel became Belteshazzar, and his friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.<sup>298</sup> Some would have seen this as an insult to their national identity. But Daniel & friends understood that it should rather be seen as an honor, because Ashpenaz now thought of them as real Babylonians. The friends had enough of the idolatry they saw and prayed that God would manifest Himself, confronting the king. They wanted God to show Himself as King of kings and Lord of lords, because Nebuchadnezzar had taken that title for himself.

We read nowhere that the four friends heard God's voice, calling them into missions. They were normal believers, seeking to serve God wherever they went. Had they known the challenges God would place on their way, they might have shrunk away. Wouldn't you, if you had known you would be thrown into a fiery furnace or a lion's den?

In the life of Daniel & friends we see a beautiful example of missionary training. Had they not been raised with God-fearing principles in Judah, they would never have maintained these in a pagan court. Their decision to not defile themselves was one of the most important components of a successful missionary career. From a missionary training point of view we might say that this 'home training' could be compared with a Bible school education. This is an invaluable part of the shaping of workers in God's Kingdom.

Then, they were not sent to the field alone, but *in a team*. They could support each other, pray for one another, discuss decisions to be taken, etc. Yet, this is not enough when we look at the demands of missionary ministry. Daniel & friends learned the language, literature and culture *at their mission field*. Although there is nothing against linguistic- and cultural training at home, nothing can replace continued learning on the field.

The friends were trained *for three years*, with only secular employment in mind. Missionaries cannot do with less.

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<sup>298</sup> Dan. 1:5,7

Before one functions in another culture, speaks another language, understands the religious beliefs, and knows the indigenous value system, a new missionary may well be three years underway.

The moment that the men were no longer perceived as foreigners came when Ashpenaz gave them a new name. They had now earned the right to speak as Babylonians to Babylonians. That was the time that their cross-cultural ministry could safely start.

The significance of Daniel's missionary training model is, that if we want to present God in a way that people understand, He must be presented within *their* cultural context, *not in ours*. As long as we present God in our way – which is foreign to our hosts – *He Himself will be perceived as a Foreigner*, and nobody entrusts his life to a foreigner. The best example is Jesus, Who became a man, a Hebrew among Hebrews, to serve Hebrews. Becoming Man, He was no longer a 'God from afar', a foreigner.<sup>299</sup> Paul followed this example by 'becoming all things to all men, to save at least a few'.<sup>300</sup>

It is obvious that contextualization is not a 20<sup>th</sup> century given, nor even a New Testament one; God designed it already in His missionary training for Daniel and his friends 2,600 years ago, not to mention Joseph and Moses!

### *Study Questions*

1. *Daniel's missionary functionality started with ... ..*
2. *In what three ways did the young Hebrews have to learn Babylonian culture?*
3. *Explain why Daniel and his friends were such God-fearing men.*
4. *What was the significance of them receiving Babylonian names?*
5. *How did this affect the way in which the Babylonians regarded the young men's God?*
6. *God must be presented in ... cultural context, not in ...*

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<sup>299</sup> Phil. 2:5-7

<sup>300</sup> 1 Cor. 9:19-22

## Chapter III

### Power Encounters as Missionary Method -1-

#### *Introduction*

A power encounter is a confrontation between God and the gods of the nations. Often the adversary is the initiator in such a conflict, but not always. The outcome however, is never uncertain. God has never lost once. The reason that these power encounters take place is always twofold: so that people ('all the earth') will know that the Lord is God and that besides Him there is no other. In other words: power encounters are one of the tools God put at the disposal of His missionaries, in the Old Testament as well as in the New.

In this chapter I give several examples, but there are many more. The idea is to be aware of the possibility that you, as missionary, may be chosen by God to be the human key-role player as God's ambassador in such an encounter. Nearly always such encounters occur in frontier-missions situations.

Read the familiar stories of Moses & Pharaoh, Amalek, Balaam, some stories in Samuel and Kings, Daniel and friends as well as that of Esther & Mordechai in a new light: the light of world missions!

## 1. *Moses & Pharaoh*

The word power encounter does not occur in the Bible. It is a missiological term that we use to describe God- or man-initiated meetings between Him and a lesser opposing power, posing itself as god. In such confrontations the Almighty God always wins. These encounters take place in time and space, at locations where God's Kingdom is about to push back the kingdom of darkness. That is where the theme of world missions surfaces.

This is exciting, but at the moment that human agents become God's chosen instruments to execute such power encounters – as is always the case – it may become a scary experience to them. At first, Moses undertook five attempts to escape the honor.<sup>301</sup>

The plagues represented judgments over the gods of Egypt.<sup>302</sup> At the start of the confrontation, Moses is sent to Pharaoh to stand before him as God.<sup>303</sup> This is where we see the first large-scale, humanly operated power encounter take place. The people representing the enemy were Jannes and Jambres.<sup>304</sup> They attempted to withstand Moses and Aaron four times.<sup>305</sup> These Egyptian magicians imitated the miracles Moses performed three times, but from the fourth time onward they realized they were no match for the God of Israel.

The plagues were each of a nature that attacked or ridiculed one or more of the Egyptian gods, thus proving their ungodliness in comparison with the only true God. On God's assignment, Moses arranged a conflict between the divine and the devilish, between God and the gods.

In Egypt the river Nile was worshipped as the god of life and fertility. To this god many little Hebrew boys were sacrificed. When God hit that god (his name was Hapi), the blood of these little ones surfaced.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Ex. 3:11,13; 4:1,10,13

<sup>302</sup> 12:12b

<sup>303</sup> 7:1 (Hebrew: 'Elohim')

<sup>304</sup> 2 Tim. 3:8

<sup>305</sup> Ex. 7:8-12, 16-22; 8:5-7, 16-19

<sup>306</sup> Compare this thought with Gen. 4:10, where Abel's blood 'cried from the earth'

The water turned into blood (the *first* plague). The Egyptians also worshipped different sorts of fish, and because the Nile-god was hit, judgment came over these venerated fish as well, so that they died.

The *second* plague (frogs) attacked the goddess ‘of the resurrection’ Heka (or Heqet, who was pictured as frog) and thus also judged the worship of a part of nature.

Set, father of the gods in the Egyptian pantheistic assembly and protector of harvests, was hit in the *third* plague (gnats).

The *fourth* plague (flies) challenged the belief that flies possessed reproductive and creation power. Therefore no one killed flies. Judgment was pronounced here over Beelzebub (‘lord of the flies’). There are similarities with the Philistine god Baal-zebub<sup>307</sup> who was confronted by Elijah. In the NT he is called the prince of demons.<sup>308</sup> These were quite some dark forces that Moses and later Elijah, were up against. It may not surprise us (given the similarities between the ministries of these two men) that we later see a similar duo appear as the two witnesses.<sup>309</sup>

The Egyptians worshipped quite a number of animals, and with the *fifth* plague (livestock pestilence) the bull-god Apis was judged.

For the *sixth* plague Moses, at God’s order, threw a handful of ashes from a furnace into the air, which then settled on people’s bodies as sores. That furnace was probably a place where human sacrifices were brought to the ‘queen-mother-of-the-highest-heavens’, Neit. By sacrificing humans the Egyptians must have thought that they could prevent further plagues.

The *seventh* plague (hail, thunder and fire) was directed against Shu, the god of the atmosphere and his colleagues Isis and Osiris. None of them was able to change the deplorable weather conditions.

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<sup>307</sup> 2 Kings 1:2

<sup>308</sup> Matt. 12:24

<sup>309</sup> Rev. 11:3-12

The *eighth* plague judged the god Seraja, who was supposed to protect the country against locusts. The faith of the Egyptians must have been shaken severely, by seeing so many of their gods fail in their own 'field of expertise'.

The *ninth* plague (darkness) ridiculed the most important of them: Ra, the sun god. People may have wondered after three days, whether their god had died.

The *tenth* plague was not a judgment over a god; no culture knows of any that ultimately protects against death.

Pharaoh was venerated as god in Egypt, and as such was the main human opponent of Moses and Aaron in this struggle in the heavenlies. As usual the whole battle centered on worship.<sup>310</sup> God demanded that His people would leave the place to worship Him. Pharaoh refused.<sup>311</sup> Four times he proposed a compromise<sup>312</sup> and so showed his rebellious attitude towards God. God never accepted any of Pharaoh's proposals: there is no way obstinate humans can negotiate with God.

Another aspect that draws our attention is that, to the degree that persecution increases,<sup>313</sup> God's Self-revelation increases as well. In the next chapter God presents Himself four times as 'I AM' and speaks His word of power 'I will' eight times.<sup>314</sup>

It is remarkable that Pharaoh hardened his heart six times<sup>315</sup> before God hardened it four times,<sup>316</sup> thus confirming him in his deliberate and consistent choices. This is an obvious blow in the face of the 'predestination-unto-damnation' proponents. God is never unfair, not even against His fiercest enemy, by pre-determining their demise.

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<sup>310</sup> Ex. 5:1; 7:16; 8:26; 9:1,13; 10:3

<sup>311</sup> In fact Pharaoh demanded the 'worship' of the slaves for himself. Fear, slavery and imprisonment are negative forms of worship, because it forces the attention of the subjects on the oppressor, who leaves them no freedom to worship any other God.

<sup>312</sup> Ex. 8:21 (*'here'*), 24 (*'not far'*); 10:11 (*'only the men'*), 24 (*'without flocks and herds'*)

<sup>313</sup> 5:5-9

<sup>314</sup> 6:1-8 (N.I.V.)

<sup>315</sup> 7:13,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7b

<sup>316</sup> 9:12; 10:1,20,27

In fact, Pharaoh could even have saved his earthly life, had he not waged one last act of warfare against the Israelites – in which he drowned with his army.

### *Study Questions*

1. *Define the term 'power encounter' in your own words.*
2. *What are the two main goals of power encounters?*
3. *What was the nature of the power encounters in Egypt, as conducted by Moses?*
4. *Give an example of this, by means of one plague of your choice.*
5. *The whole battle centered on ...*
6. *In what special way did God speak, when persecution increased?*

## 2. *Amalek & Balaam*

Israel's next opponents were Amalek and Balaam. The people had hardly left Egypt when Amalek appeared. One may argue that it would be incorrect to call this physical battle of army against army a power encounter because its nature was not purely spiritual. But then, neither were the plagues of Egypt, although these had a spiritual foundation, the outcome was very physical indeed. We will see this principle often during other power encounters. So, let us look at Amalek and Balaam.

In Egypt, Israel had been an undistinguished bunch of slaves; during their walk through the desert they became a distinct nation. God's main purpose with Israel was to make them different from the nations around them,<sup>317</sup> with as goals: to remember God's name from generation to generation, to know that there is no one like the Lord and that the earth is the Lord's.<sup>318</sup> Israel was to know God intimately, so as to show Him to the surrounding nations.

The first expression of Israel's distinction after the separation from Egypt is the war with Amalek<sup>319</sup> — a war *from generation to generation*. Amalek was Esau's grandson<sup>320</sup> and lived in Edom. He was the third generation that God hated for his indifference and disobedience.<sup>321</sup> God mentions Amalek again in Deuteronomy, where He reminds Israel to never give up the battle against that people.<sup>322</sup> Much later, Israel's first king, Saul, failed in this assignment.<sup>323</sup>

Ex. 17 shows 'how to fight Amalek' who is typical of the carnal nature, as was Esau. This is achieved by prayer, as we see in Moses who raised his hands to heaven and was supported by Aaron and Hur. God proclaims His 'war against Amalek from generation to generation' because *every* believer has to fight his carnal nature *all* his life — but his God is his Ally in that battle. It would have been impossible for Israel to be a blessing to the nations when not at least a beginning of the battle against Amalek had been made.

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<sup>317</sup> Ex. 19:5,6

<sup>318</sup> 3:15; 8:10; 9:14,29; 10:2

<sup>319</sup> 17:8-16

<sup>320</sup> Gen. 36:12,16

<sup>321</sup> Mal. 1:3; Rom. 9:13. See also Chapter I / 2, 6, 9, 11 & 12

<sup>322</sup> Deut. 25:17-19

<sup>323</sup> 1 Sam. 15

The same applies to the church today: it will never become a blessing to the nations when the battle against flesh and sin is not taken seriously; nor will any individual who fails in this area, be.

Another power encounter that Israel had in the desert we see in the story about Balaam.<sup>324</sup> It contains elements of what in New Testament times would become known as spiritual warfare. In the Balaam story Moab engaged Israel in spiritual warfare and met Israel's God as a powerful enemy. The effect of such meetings invariably is that the nations learn something about the *God of the nations*. In power encounters the enemy is sometimes the initiator but always the loser. Core text in this story – also of significance to the church – is 'There is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel'.<sup>325</sup>

Israel had no intention to attack Moab but the Moabites were terrified after what Israel did to the Amorites who had attacked them. They resorted to witchcraft and hired Balaam from Aram to curse the people God had blessed.

It is important to understand in world missions, that God's enemies will seek to attack His people, the church, to thwart her missionary purposes. When His people come to bless the nations they will always be hindered by the devil and his demons. Paul made clear that our struggle is 'not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'.<sup>326</sup>

Whoever works for the expansion of God's Kingdom needs to understand this spiritual battle. In our story we see how the enemy fails in his *spiritual* attack. Unfortunately in the next chapter and appealing to the cravings of the *flesh*, he succeeds. Israel's men fell for sexual immorality. Where the Moabite king, his princes, the elders and Balaam failed, Moabite women succeeded. This was also Balaam's idea.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Numb. 22 – 24

<sup>325</sup> 23:23

<sup>326</sup> Eph. 6:12

<sup>327</sup> Numb. 31:16

There is no sorcery or divination against Israel: God's people enjoy spiritual protection. But where self-control is replaced by indulgence, the flesh becomes a willing recipient of the enemy's temptations. Of course Moab was the source of the temptation, but that did not free Israel from its responsibility to resist it. The same applies today: we are responsible to resist temptations. The danger facing God's people is the longing for the *world's* pleasures. Israel had *physically* left Egypt, but when would it drive Egypt from their *hearts*?<sup>328</sup>

Israel learned that physical battles can be won by spiritual means (Amalek). They found that God protects against spiritual attacks (Balaam). They also learned that disobedience was dangerous: 24,000 men died after their fornication.<sup>329</sup> This was a practical lesson, the memory of which must have made much sense to them when God warned them again to not mingle with Moabites or adopt their practices.<sup>330</sup> The commission was to 'drive out, destroy and demolish'. We understand now why failing to do so is deadly. God is impartial: He won't tolerate from His *people* what He judges in the *nations*. Balaam too, died in the process.<sup>331</sup>

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain why power encounters, although spiritual in nature, have a physical dimension as well?*
2. *What was God's main purpose for the people of Israel?*
3. *What was the main weapon of warfare against Amalek?*
4. *Explain why the war with Amalek has to be fought 'from generation to generation' – in a typological sense.*
5. *What is the New Testament method Paul teaches us about, when it comes to meeting modern Balaams?*
6. *When the spiritual dimension has been dealt with, what is the next danger that God's people may encounter?*

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<sup>328</sup> See e.g. 15:39b

<sup>329</sup> 25:9

<sup>330</sup> 33:50-56

<sup>331</sup> 31:8

### *3. Samuel & Kings*

In the books of Joshua and Judges there are several occasions where God's 'hero of the day' fights a righteous battle and in doing so is helped miraculously by God. In a way one might classify these battles also as power encounters, but then the list would become endless; it is better to classify these battles as types of the usual spiritual battles that believers and their leaders have to fight. Therefore, in this chapter we concentrate rather on the obvious encounters between God and a hostile king or god.

Our first observation concerns a story in Samuel<sup>332</sup>: the ark of the Lord has been captured by the Philistines and is put into the temple of Dagon. Of course no idol can stand in the presence of Israel's God: the statue fell down twice and the population suffered heavily from tumors. It is one of the most direct power encounter in the Bible, where there is a confrontation between God and an idol, without human interference, but where nevertheless people learn their lesson well: only God is God and their gods are inferior. The main purpose of world missions has always been, to show people that there is only one true God!

The story of David and Goliath<sup>333</sup> can clearly be classified as a power encounter – in spite of its physical expression – : the giant made the mistake to not only challenge the people of Israel and its king<sup>334</sup> but also the God of Israel.<sup>335</sup> That cost him his life and the missionary purpose was the same: 'and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel'. This act of faith classified David as a full-fledged missionary – a trait that we meet in his Psalms over and over as well.

In Kings we read about how, after the split of the kingdom of Israel, gross idolatry is seen in the northern parts, the ten tribes of Israel. When a man of God is being sent to prophesy against the altar of the idols, he is opposed by king Jeroboam I, but as soon as the king orders the arrest of the prophet his hand withers and, humiliated, he begs the prophet to pray for healing.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> 1 Sam. 4-6

<sup>333</sup> Ch. 17

<sup>334</sup> 17:8-10

<sup>335</sup> 17:26,36,43-47

<sup>336</sup> 1 Kings 13:1-6

In this spiritual power encounter God showed Himself superior to the calf-gods of the northern kingdom. It is a good example of how one single missionary can stand in front of a national ruler and confront him with God's power.

A bigger power encounter, and more visible on a national level, took place when Elijah confronted king Ahab and his 950 Baal- and Ashera-priests with the question of who the true God really is. The priests and their gods failed miserably and God showed Himself superior to all of them, by consuming the watered altar and its contents by fire.<sup>337</sup> The desired missiological outcome among the apostate Israelites was the same: once again they confessed the God of Israel as the one true God.

Later in Kings we see two other power encounters.<sup>338</sup> Aram's king Ben-Hadad attacked King Ahab. God wanted to use this opportunity to judge the latter, but Ahab did not recognize this purpose, that could only be seen with the eyes of faith. Although Ahab played his part involuntarily, he was liberated at first<sup>339</sup> but jeopardized God's planned judgment of Ben-Hadad after the second time,<sup>340</sup> which eventually cost him his own life.<sup>341</sup> Both times purpose and message were identical: 'then you will know that I am the Lord'.<sup>342</sup>

Later, Aramean officer Naaman concluded after his healing: 'Now I know there is no God in the entire world except in Israel'.<sup>343</sup>

An impressive story from the era of the kings is, how the Assyrian king Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign.<sup>344</sup> This Gentile ruler had the audacity to challenge the people, the king and the God of Israel, by stating that he was more powerful than the gods of the nations he had conquered and that in similar fashion he would subdue Israel.

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<sup>337</sup> 18:16-39

<sup>338</sup> Ch. 20

<sup>339</sup> 20:1-21

<sup>340</sup> 20:22-34

<sup>341</sup> 20:42 & 22:37

<sup>342</sup> 20:13b,28b

<sup>343</sup> 2 Kings 5:15

<sup>344</sup> 18:17 – 19:37; Is. 36 & 37 in 701 BC

He claimed that God was unable to save Israel, which he spoke twice and wrote once.<sup>345</sup> The outcome was terrible: his army of 185,000 people was slain by the Lord in one night. Sennacherib returned to Assyria in disgrace and then his people knew that Israel's God is more powerful than their own gods. Sennacherib died a while later at the hands of his own sons while worshipping in his god's temple, who apparently was unable to protect him.

In all cases the godly participants in these power encounters were courageous enough to put their trust completely in the Lord, especially when it was a matter of life and death.

### *Study Questions*

1. *What was unique about the power encounter in Dagon's temple?*
2. *What was Goliath's main mistake?*
3. *How did God show Himself superior to the calf-gods in the northern kingdom of Israel?*
4. *Why did Elijah confront the Baal-priests on mount Carmel?*
5. *What did Naaman learn from his healing?*
6. *Why was the Assyrian king Sennacherib defeated?*

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<sup>345</sup> 2 Chron. 32:14-19

#### 4. *Daniel & Friends*

In the book of Daniel, we see five power encounters in a real cross-cultural mission's context. Daniel's name means 'God is my Judge' or 'God will judge'. The truth of his name is seen in the confrontations between God and Babylon's idols. Judgment is made between true and false by five contests, in chapters 2-6.

We see the *first* in chapter 2. Daniel had been specifically equipped to confront Babylon's idols with God.<sup>346</sup> He did not take this for granted, but engaged his friends as prayer partners until revelation came. They prayed for their salvation and Daniel praised the Lord for His answer.<sup>347</sup>

The picture of the coming Kingdom<sup>348</sup> is a gem of Old Testament revelation, pre-viewing the coming millennium of peace. It contains the message of God's purpose: to be the recognized God of all nations. When Daniel was in Babylon, the king apparently longed for truth and reality,<sup>349</sup> found it and believed it – temporarily.<sup>350</sup> God honors the true seeker with true revelation, which brings responsibility to the finder: will he believe and act upon it? Nebuchadnezzar did not, and set up a statue some years later – for himself.

This led in chapter 3 to a fire-baptism<sup>351</sup> for Daniel's friends. Their commitment to God was seen in their willingness to lay down their lives for His honor: a *second* power encounter was invoked by the king, when he said 'What god will be able to rescue you from my hand?'<sup>352</sup> He would know soon, in front of a multi-national company of witnesses, because God turned this devilish meeting into a preview of what will come: all nations, tribes, peoples and languages standing before His throne.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Dan. 2:27,28

<sup>347</sup> 2:17-19 and 20-23 respectively

<sup>348</sup> 2:34,44

<sup>349</sup> 2:5,6

<sup>350</sup> 2:29-47

<sup>351</sup> See Matt. 3:11b

<sup>352</sup> Dan. 3:15

<sup>353</sup> Rev. 5:9 & 7:9

The confession of these men is touching: ‘He will save us ... but even if not ... we will not serve your gods’.<sup>354</sup> Only with grim determination can missionaries stand such persecution and teach all nations that no other god can save.<sup>355</sup> These men were ordinary people, not ministers. Yet, they were pure 24-carat genuine missionaries!

In chapter 4 we see the *third* power encounter, also of great importance because of the presence of all nations. Nebuchadnezzar had learned a lesson but did not live up to it; his words were only lip service to God; in his heart he glorified himself.<sup>356</sup> Warned in a dream, interpreted by Daniel, he got one year to repent – which he left unused.<sup>357</sup>

The miracle that followed when Nebuchadnezzar’s mind became like an animal’s for 7 years, is that he was restored to royalty, reaching greater heights than before; which underlined Daniel’s earlier words:<sup>358</sup> ‘He sets up kings and deposes them’. Then N. uttered a great confession,<sup>359</sup> the last we hear from him. God was very gracious to him by revealing His sovereignty, and by giving him several chances to repent of his pride. N. apparently did not harden his heart to the degree that Pharaoh did; he was taught, slid back, repented and was restored. Just like some believers, who are not unwilling, but too lazy to seek God’s way.

In chapter 5 we see that at the end of the exile, during the last night of the Babylonian Empire, God and Daniel are forgotten again. Daniel was now over 80 years old and idolatry was rampant. Once more God’s revelation appears, announcing judgment on a ruler who could have used his historical knowledge to fear the sovereign God, but chose not to;<sup>360</sup> hence the verdict that resulted in Babylonia’s take-over by the Medes and Persians.

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<sup>354</sup> Dan. 3:17,18

<sup>355</sup> 3:29

<sup>356</sup> 4:1-3,30

<sup>357</sup> 4:27-29

<sup>358</sup> 4:36; compare Dan. 2:21 with 4:17,25,32

<sup>359</sup> 4:34b,35,37

<sup>360</sup> 5:2-6; 11,12; 22-28

The golden head was replaced by the chest and arms of silver, as Daniel foretold much earlier.<sup>361</sup> It was an indirect power encounter: the material gods versus the Most High.<sup>362</sup> this was His last meeting with dissipating Babylon.

In chapter 6 we see the *fifth* power encounter. Daniel's jealous colleagues challenged God's ability to save him, which cost them their lives; nobody can equate God with pagan gods and live.<sup>363</sup> The first meeting between God and the new empire inspired the king to utter a confession, similar to Nebuchadnezzar's. This was a powerful witness to all nations.<sup>364</sup> The characters of Daniel and his secular colleagues present strong contrasts. Daniel's life-long Godly training qualified him to rule; contrary to his jealous, power-hungry and self-seeking co-workers. Similarly, those who walk with Christ now will rule with Him later<sup>365</sup> while today's Godless rulers will never have authority again.

In 539 BC the Babylonian empire ceased to exist. The only righteous survivor was Daniel. In the future, the idolatrous world system, called Babylon in Revelation, will come to a definite end. Daniel and Revelation are books of power encounters, where God annihilates the gods.

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain how Daniel's name is indicative for the nature of his ministry.*
2. *What future reality did Nebuchadnezzar's first dream point to?*
3. *What was the core-belief and confession of Daniel's friends when they faced the fiery furnace?*
4. *Describe some differences between Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar.*
5. *Describe the character differences between Daniel and his co-workers, also in the light of the future.*
6. *In Daniel's time Babylon was an empire. What will Babylon be at the end of time?*

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<sup>361</sup> 2:32,39

<sup>362</sup> Compare 5:4,23 with 5:18-30

<sup>363</sup> 6:20,24

<sup>364</sup> Compare Dan. 2:47; 3:28,29 and 4:49 with 6:25-27

<sup>365</sup> 7:18,22b,27; Rev. 3:21 & 20:4b,6b

## 5. *Esther & Mordechai*

Esther's story differs from the others, in that no direct missionary outreach was taking place; what was at stake here was the survival of that part of God's people<sup>366</sup> that had failed to return after the exile had ended.<sup>367</sup> We see that even a secularized 'nominal' part of God's people still enjoys His faithfulness and protection in the face of a powerful enemy.

This book, in which God does not speak explicitly – His name is not even mentioned – has often been debated for its genuineness. It is quoted nowhere in the New Testament. Some argued that therefore it could not possibly be canonical. Others see that we have a gem of a book here, showing the old theme of God's people being threatened and salvation being provided by His invisible presence. Why was He so invisible at that time? In the Torah we read: 'And I will certainly hide My face on that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods'.<sup>368</sup>

The Jews, who had remained in Persia after the first group returned with Zerubbabel, might be considered the more secular. They were comfortable in their country of exile and it may have been the crisis, induced by Haman that compelled them to reconsider their religious identity and their God. He, behind the scenes, had put His instruments of salvation in place at the right time. As such, the book is thoroughly evangelical in nature. Esther is an example of a missionary who had a hard time accepting she really was one. Without her interference, the second half of her book, the second half of Ezra and the whole of Nehemiah might not have been written, if the Jews had been eliminated by Haman's planned genocide.

The people who had faced the threat of extinction at this villain's hands, were saved by God's miraculous dealings with two people who, although simple, were of great character: Esther and her uncle Mordechai. Esther, during her royal career, learned not to love her life, but to be prepared to lay it down for her people. Her words became classics: 'If I perish, I perish'.<sup>369</sup> Not that it had been easy for her.

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<sup>366</sup> Between 479 and 471 BC

<sup>367</sup> After the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC

<sup>368</sup> Deut. 31:17,18

<sup>369</sup> Esther 4:16

She had to be admonished by Mordechai that she might have come to royal position ‘for such a time as this’.<sup>370</sup> She had to accept that a divine plan for her life existed, just like there is one for each of us: ‘For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do’.<sup>371</sup>

This book will have more spiritual significance for us when we understand the typological meaning of its characters. These represent the real characters: ‘...a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things...’.<sup>372</sup> Types cannot always be precise in detail. Only that aspect of the type, given in God’s Word, is reliable as a spiritual lesson.<sup>373</sup>

*King Ahasueros* is a type of God the Father, very rich and ruler over the greatest kingdom of the world, graciously extending his scepter towards the one he loved and had elevated to royal dignity.

His wife, *Queen Esther*, typifies the true missionary church who understood her role to save the people with which she had been doomed to die, interceding, fasting and pleading with the king.

Esther had taken the place of former *Queen Vashti*, who had refused to obey the king’s rightful demand to display her beauty in front of the representatives of the nations. She typifies the false church that lost its missionary zeal, to be an example for the nations. In this sense she may also be seen as a type of Israel, being banned into exile for her disobedience.

*The Seven Counselors* to the king<sup>374</sup> are a type of the Holy Spirit, also called the Seven Spirits of the Lord.<sup>375</sup>

It is easy to discern *Haman* as a type of Satan who once occupied an important position in the heavenly Kingdom but turned against his Master’s top creation – mankind – for sheer jealousy.

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<sup>370</sup> 4:13,14

<sup>371</sup> Eph. 2:10

<sup>372</sup> Heb. 10:1

<sup>373</sup> B. J. Bailey, *Esther*, Hebron Press, Benoni, South Africa, 1996a:6

<sup>374</sup> Esther 1:13,14

<sup>375</sup> Is. 11:2; Rev. 1:4

The victim of Haman's jealousy was *Mordechai* – type of Jesus Christ – who defeated his adversary and inherited his position as second man at the royal court. He inspired Esther to save the Jews and became Esther's sender reminding us of Jesus' words: 'As the Father sent Me, I send you'<sup>376</sup>: 'for such a time as this'.<sup>377</sup>

This was a clear power encounter, but the context differed from the preceding ones in that Haman, representing the invisible enemy, was stopped in his genocidal attempts by Esther and Mordechai, who represented the invisible, silent God, Who nevertheless turned out to be the winner of the contest. The devil took the initiative to challenge God – and lost. Can it be that this crisis among the Jews triggered the return to Jerusalem of the next group under Ezra, about 15 years later?

### *Study Questions*

1. *What classical overall theme do we see in the book of Esther?*
2. *How do we see that Esther had a hard time accepting her missionary role?*
3. *Eventually, which words show best Esther's utter surrender to God's plan with her life?*
4. *Whom might we consider to be Esther's sender?*
5. *Explain the typological significance of Esther, Mordechai and Haman.*
6. *What happening, about 15 years later, may have been caused by this episode in Israel's history?*

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<sup>376</sup> John 20:21

<sup>377</sup> Esther 4:14

## Chapter IV

### Missions & Eschatology -1-

#### *Introduction*

The link between missions & eschatology is manifold: *firstly*, although the Kingdom of God started almost 2,000 years ago, its fullness is not yet here. In other words, we still expect it to become manifest on earth with the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Missions are the runner-up to the last day of this era, which will culminate in the Kingdom, then visible for all.

*Secondly*, Jesus, speaking to His disciples, linked preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to the ends of the earth, to *the end* (of this present era).<sup>378</sup> In other words: as long as the great commission has not been finished, we will not see His return, just like Joseph's brothers would not see his face again, unless they brought in Benjamin, the last of the brothers.<sup>379</sup>

*Thirdly*, many people do not see the eschatological urge behind a biblically based missiology, especially in lots of cultures in the Developing World. This chapter attempts to help you become more conscious toward future-oriented reasons behind doing world missions.

*Finally*, the Church is being urged to pray 'Come, Lord Jesus, come!'<sup>380</sup> Should she then not long for her Groom, and prepare for Him to come as soon as possible, by meeting His criteria?

The second five entries of this topic you find in Part II B.

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<sup>378</sup> Matt. 24:14

<sup>379</sup> See the last paragraph of Chapter I/12

<sup>380</sup> Rev. 22:17,20

## 1. *Exodus*

World missions seek to speed up the Lord's return and the glorious manifestation of His Kingdom on earth. There is also a direct connection between doing missions to see the Kingdom break through in power, and its agents on earth who will suffer to see its completion. Therefore, this chapter also intends to contribute towards the preparation of the church in general and missionaries in particular to suffer for the King, His mission and the Kingdom.

That is why you will find ten issues on this topic: five in this volume and five in the third. We now start with the book of Exodus, and particularly consider the eschatological implications of the plagues that took place in Egypt.

It is necessary to look at the wider biblical picture of the plagues. When we understand the eschatological connotations of Ex. 5-12 we will read the narrative of the plagues from a different but richer perspective, lifted from the level of mere history to that of prophecy, yet to be fulfilled. Then it becomes of great importance for God's people worldwide today, as well as for their behavior in relationship to the world and their attitude towards the completion of world missions.

There are certainly similarities between the redemption of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses<sup>381</sup> and the ultimate redemption of God's people at the end of time. Also there are similarities between the great tribulation that is yet to come, and the plagues that befell Egypt. We cannot go into many details concerning these things, but a few need to be mentioned in order to grasp the important prophetic elements of Exodus.

The *first* remarkable aspect is that as Israel's redemption drew near, at first their circumstances worsened.<sup>382</sup> Their slavery became a full-fledged tribulation. Jesus said the same would apply to His people of the end-times.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> About 1447 BC

<sup>382</sup> Ex. 5

<sup>383</sup> Matt. 24:21,22

A *second* aspect consists of the two occasions where we read that such plagues ‘had never happened in Egypt before, nor will it happen again’.<sup>384</sup> This reminds us of the way Jesus described the great tribulation of the end times.<sup>385</sup>

In the *third* place we see that only *after* the plagues occurred, the ultimate redemption of the Israelites took place when they left Egypt. They did not leave before or during the plagues.

*Fourthly*, in the book of Revelation we see the ministry of the two witnesses, reminding us of the ministries of Moses and Elijah.<sup>386</sup> Both appeared at the mount of transfiguration to speak with Jesus about His departure (Greek: ἐξόδος, exodus), which He was about to fulfill at Jerusalem.<sup>387</sup> Moses appeared at the critical time (Israel’s tribulation in Egypt, just prior to the exodus), and appeared again at the critical time in Jesus’ life (before His tribulation, preceding His exodus from death). Finally he<sup>388</sup> appears at the critical time of the great tribulation, just prior to the ultimate liberation of the Church.

A *fifth* element we see in the similarities between the Song of Moses in Exodus and its parallel in the book of Revelation.<sup>389</sup> The fact that the text in Revelation is called ‘song of Moses’ links the two passages in a way that gives prophetic relevance to the Exodus-narrative.

The *consequence* is, that the still future events in Revelation find illustrations in the history of the plagues of Egypt. Such scriptural links are not coincidental; therefore both passages should be understood as complementary and as each explaining certain details of the total.

As said, Israel was still *in* Egypt, *not yet out of Egypt*, at the time that the plagues raged over the country.

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<sup>384</sup> Ex. 10:14; 11:6

<sup>385</sup> Matt. 24:21

<sup>386</sup> Rev. 11:5,6

<sup>387</sup> Luke 9:31

<sup>388</sup> It will be someone whose ministry strongly resembles that of Moses, but *not a reincarnation of Moses* – since the Bible does not teach such thing

<sup>389</sup> Compare Ex. 15 with Rev. 15:3,4

The *sixth* aspect illustrates this, because on *five* occasions God said: 'I will deal differently with the land of Goshen' (where Israel lived).<sup>390</sup> We cannot say with certainty that Israel was not affected by any of the plagues, but it does not say they were; whereas these five occasions, saying that they were *not* affected seem to establish the principle that *God keeps His people safe in the midst of tribulation* that befalls others. If this principle is established in the Old Testament, there seems to be no reason why it would not be eschatologically applicable in the New Testament as well.<sup>391</sup>

These arguments all seem to speak out against the 19<sup>th</sup> century theory of a *pre-tribulation* rapture of the Church, as expected and preached by many. Israel, God's people of old had no easy way out. Neither had Jesus. So, why would we?

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain the link between eschatology and world missions.*
2. *Explain the link between finishing the great commission and suffering.*
3. *Explain the similarities between the plagues of Egypt and the great tribulation that is still to come.*
4. *Which six reasons do you find in the text, why there is a strong connection between the Exodus narrative and the end-times?*

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<sup>390</sup> Ex. 8:22; 9:4,26; 10:21-23; 11:7

<sup>391</sup> Rev. 3:10 is often interpreted as if 'to keep from' would mean 'to snatch out'.

The Greek *τήρέω*, *tereoo*, however, means 'to guard, take care of' or 'to keep watch' – and therefore rather states the opposite of such interpretation

## 2. *Isaiah*

We now look at some eschatological elements in the book of Isaiah, so as to discover their relevance for world missions.

The prophets take the issue of world missions a big step further. As Genesis proved to be a cornerstone for the following books, so Isaiah and his colleagues present vital building materials from the prophetic angle.

Isaiah's name (meaning 'Jehovah is Salvation') makes him a true missionary: a man sent of God<sup>392</sup> to proclaim His redemption to Israel and the nations. His book has many colors: there are eschatological elements speaking about the times of the end, the Millennium and the New Heaven and the New Earth. There are judgment prophecies, some having to do with the time in which Isaiah lived, some yet to come at the end of this era. Some connections with the book of Revelation make it easier to understand what time the prophet is speaking about.

Isaiah uses expressions, indicating that he does not speak of his own days (or not too distant future) only, *but about the time that is still future to us*. These are: 'In the last days'; 'In that day'; 'At that time'; 'In days to come' and 'The Day of the Lord'. When we see these, we need to be aware that he speaks about what is still future to us.

There are two main categories: *one group* of end-time-prophecies deals with God's *judgment* over the world and *another* speaks about the *blessings* God has in store for His own *after* that judgment. Although this author believes in the establishment of a millennial Kingdom of world peace under Christ's rule, with His glorified Church on earth after His personal and physical return, to be followed by yet another era that the Bible describes as 'New Heavens and a New Earth', there are others who believe only in the latter. For this study that is unimportant, because we only deal with implications for world missions, and these will be finished by the end of the great tribulation.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Is. 6:8

<sup>393</sup> John 9:4 'There will be a night in which no one can work'

If we simplify the issue to the utmost, we can say that world missions have a *warning function* for which it can use all Isaiah has to say about *judgment*. Similarly, world missions has a *vision-casting, encouraging and comforting* role to play by using all Isaiah says about the bright *future after that judgment*, God has in store for those who love and obey Him. Our understanding increases, when we see how Isaiah's prophecies compare to the book of Revelation.

Since there are many eschatological verses in Isaiah, we have to limit ourselves by categorizing his prophecies as future blessings and as judgments. Taking about an hour to read the indicated passages will bring the point home convincingly.

A bone of contention may be the question of whether these verses of blessing speak about Israel or the Church. I would like to comment that both Church and Israel will be blessed 'in that day': the one as a spiritual people, the latter as a natural people. Without doubt they will enjoy one another.

The texts about the future *blessings* are:

Is. 2:1-4; 4:2-6; 11:6-16; 12:1-6; 18:7; 19:18-25; 25:6-9; 26:1,2,19-21; 27:2-6,12,13; 28:5,6; 29:18,19; 32:1-5 (v. 2-4 being a reversal of 6:9,10); 32:15-20; 33:17-24; 35; 40:10,11; 41:15-20,25-27; 43:18-20; 52:7-12; 54:11,12 (compare with Rev. 21); 60:11,19,20 (compare with Rev. 21); 61:4-11; 62; 64:1,2 (compare with Rev. 22:17,20); 65:9,10,17-25; 66:7-24.

Read these passages and remember that we serve the one God Who is able to plan all this *and* make it happen. No other religion has anything to offer that comes close to what God promises us!

The texts about the *judgments* are:

Is. 2:6-22 (compare with Rev. 6:15-17); 5:30; 13:6,9,10 (compare with Rev. 6:12 & 8:12); 19:16,17; 21:9b (compare with Rev. 18:2); 22:15-19 (judgment over Satan); 24 (great tribulation); 27:1 (judgment over Satan, compare with Rev. 13 & 17); 30:25; 34 (compare with Rev. 16-18); 47 (*idem*); 48:20a (compare with Rev. 18:2); 51:6a (compare with Heb. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 3:10-12 and Rev. 6:14).

Reading all *these* passages confronts us with the horrors that must precede the above-mentioned blessings. It is a great relief to know that whatever disaster may happen to us is not the end; the end will be gloriously magnificent – and eternal!

We must remember that Jesus ‘for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God’.<sup>394</sup> Similarly, ‘our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us’<sup>395</sup>, as Paul said.

This may be the main eschatological lesson we learn from Isaiah: Yes, there will be suffering and turmoil as the world has never seen. But that is not the end. The good news is that we await the apotheosis of human history, this great climax of glory: Jesus Christ’s return. That is: unequaled glory for His children *and* unequaled dread for all who reject Him. Part of our missionary task consists of preparing the world for that Day of all days.

### *Study Questions*

1. *Describe Isaiah’s name in relationship to his ministry.*
2. *Which four eras does Isaiah cover in his prophecies?*
3. *Which are the two main categories of his eschatological prophecies?*
4. *How should we regard Israel and the Church in the prophets?*
5. *What is the absolute climax of world history?*
6. *Part of our missionary task is to .....*

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<sup>394</sup> Heb. 12:2

<sup>395</sup> Rom. 8:18

### 3. *Habakkuk*

Habakkuk prophesied at the time that the Babylonians were an upcoming world power.<sup>396</sup> Before him, Nahum had prophesied judgment on Nineveh and the Assyrian empire. After Nineveh fell<sup>397</sup> the Babylonian empire became prominent – until it was defeated.<sup>398</sup> Habakkuk prophesied in the early years of Babylon during the last years of kings Josiah and Jehoiachim. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah's and we see some of the latter's pain in Habakkuk: the deterioration of Judah and the upcoming judgment in the form of the foretold exile.

His *name* means 'he who loves with his whole heart'. We see this love in his prayer life: the man and his God often conversed. For Habakkuk the relationship with his Lord took precedence over his ministry. His love is also expressed in his pleas for the people under threat of a Babylonian invasion,<sup>399</sup> although he does not close his eyes to Judah's unrighteousness.<sup>400</sup> His love is ultimately expressed in the words 'though' and 'yet',<sup>401</sup> reminding us of the words of Daniel's friends<sup>402</sup> and those of Jesus.<sup>403</sup> Our trust in God tells us that bad circumstances are not final, but that His sovereignty is, and the outcome will be more glorious than one anticipates.<sup>404</sup> Habakkuk lived by this faith.<sup>405</sup>

His prayers are not monologues. God answers by revealing His perspective behind earthly occurrences.<sup>406</sup> Through prayer He reveals the spiritual meaning of things that happen in the world.

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<sup>396</sup> Hab. 1:6

<sup>397</sup> In 612 B.C.

<sup>398</sup> In 539 B.C.

<sup>399</sup> Hab. 1:5-11,12b,13b-17

<sup>400</sup> 1:2-4

<sup>401</sup> 3:17,18

<sup>402</sup> Dan. 3:17,18 'The Lord is able to save us, *but even if He does not*, we will still not bow before your image...'

<sup>403</sup> Matt. 26:39,42 'Father, if it is possible, let this cup be taken from Me, *yet, not My will but Yours* be done...'

<sup>404</sup> Hab. 3:19; Rom. 8:18

<sup>405</sup> Hab. 2:4

<sup>406</sup> 1:5-11; 2:2-20

We see indirect but vital *missiological significance* in Habakkuk: love for the Lord and His people; a vibrant prayer life, where priorities between God and ministry are right; a cry against the threats of world powers; his unconditional trust in God and his understanding of God's higher purposes behind circumstances. Without such mature spiritual properties no modern missionary can function well.

With regard to the *eschatological aspects*, we read that 'the revelation ... speaks of the end'.<sup>407</sup> These words alert us that, in the text that follows, more is meant than the end of Judah's exile.<sup>408</sup> Additional value is found in the verse that 'the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea'.<sup>409</sup> This promise still awaits fulfillment; it describes the coming Millennium when God's Kingdom will be established on earth. The thought finds support in the preceding judgment over all the earth<sup>410</sup> and over Satan, the leader of the land of wickedness.<sup>411</sup>

There are also parallels between Habakkuk and the book of Revelation, with regard to how Babel's spiritual (not military) behavior is described:<sup>412</sup> it sounds just like the complaints about the great whore of Babylon in the end times. We see the same principles in operation, of which I described the beginnings in Genesis, in chapter I/10.

Finally, when we look at the third chapter – Habakkuk's 'Psalm' – we cannot escape the impression that he prophesies about the time of the great tribulation.<sup>413</sup> His choice of words and pictures is too big for a normal chain of events – even the liberation out of Egypt is over-shadowed by the major judgments taking place at the end of time. Habakkuk seems to describe the 'night in which no one can work'.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> 2:3

<sup>408</sup> Referred to in 3:16b

<sup>409</sup> 2:14

<sup>410</sup> 3:6,12 reflected in Rev. 14:17-20

<sup>411</sup> Hab. 3:13,14 reflected in Rev. 20:1-3

<sup>412</sup> Compare Hab. 1:15-17 and 2:4a,5-12,15-19 with Rev. 17:1 – 19:3

<sup>413</sup> Hab. 3:5-15

<sup>414</sup> John 9:4

Paul tells us that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual powers and authorities in the heavenly realms.<sup>415</sup> In the book of Habakkuk we recognize the evil one behind the Babylonian hordes in their inhuman military enterprises<sup>416</sup> and spiritual attitude.<sup>417</sup> Satan also fishes for men.<sup>418</sup> Several verses in the second chapter<sup>419</sup> remind us of the descriptions of Satan we read in earlier prophets, where a ruler, worse than the kings of Babylon or Tyre is described.<sup>420</sup>

This short prophecy is a book for missionaries who serve in the last days. It gives spiritual insight in the invisible forces behind Babylon, it encourages to prayerful dialogues with God in order to understand the signs of the times and to live by faith. It also subjects the demand for material well-being to the joy there is in God the Savior.

### *Study Questions*

1. *Explain the meaning of Habakkuk's name and how this meaning expressed itself towards God.*
2. *Which of Habakkuk's character traits are worth to be followed by today's missionaries?*
3. *What other redemptive eras does Habakkuk prophesy about, than the end of Judah's exile only?*
4. *When Habakkuk speaks about Babylon, does he only speak about the political empire of his day?*
5. *What future event of church history does Habakkuk describe in his 'Psalm'?*
6. *In what verses does Habakkuk describe Satan?*

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<sup>415</sup> Eph. 6:12

<sup>416</sup> Hab. 1:6b-11

<sup>417</sup> 1:15-17

<sup>418</sup> 1:14-17

<sup>419</sup> 2:4a,5-12

<sup>420</sup> Is. 14 & Ez. 28

#### 4. *Ezekiel*

Ezekiel's book fascinates because of its extremities. He prophesied to the exiles in Babylon among whom he lived. He spoke God's word to uprooted people who were grieving and bereaved and this is one extremity: misery. The other is the number of apocalyptic visions he received which declare jubilantly that a new era, one of complete restoration, will come.

In our day we see that a large part of the Church, living under persecution, nevertheless performs cross-cultural missions to the unreached. The Chinese Church is a point in case: they work towards the sending of 100,000 missionaries all through the 10-40 window, with the express purpose to reach all the unreached on their way.<sup>421</sup>

Ezekiel's mission, especially in the beginning, is to the Israelite exiles,<sup>422</sup> *not* to the nations.<sup>423</sup> He was made watchman for the house of Israel.<sup>424</sup> Yet, later we read so many prophecies addressing the nations that we cannot deny Ezekiel's important missiological value.

Two *characteristic formulas* in the book are *firstly* Ezekiel's ministry name: God addressed him almost 100 times as 'son of man', a title that Jesus later often used for Himself. The *second* is 'Then they will know that I am the Lord' (occurring over 60 times). Missiologically significant is, that this expression applied to Israel as well as to the nations; after all, missions execute that very assignment: all must know that there is no god but God.

The book should be *divided by themes* rather than by groups of chapters. The simplest way is: messages for Israel;<sup>425</sup> messages for the nations<sup>426</sup> and messages of restoration after the exile with important eschatological aspects, referring to the New Jerusalem.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> P. Hattaway, *Back to Jerusalem*, 2003

<sup>422</sup> Ez. 1:1; 2:3-5; 3:4,5,11,15

<sup>423</sup> 3:6

<sup>424</sup> 33:7

<sup>425</sup> Chs. 1-24; 33; 34; 36; 37

<sup>426</sup> Chs. 25-32; 35; 38; 39

<sup>427</sup> Chs. 40-48

Looking at the current apathy among many churches with regard to world missions, chapter 37:1-14 seems to be quite appropriate. Anyone who has tried to interest churches that are not task-involved with regard to cross-cultural missions, knows the desperate feeling of ‘Can these dead bones live?’ Motivating compliant, introspective churches for missions seems at times as impossible as a valley of dead bones to come alive. Then, they may have come alive to a certain extent (v. 8) but the Spirit is lacking. These churches may do all sorts of things, but the Spirit that drove missionaries to the far corners of the earth for centuries is largely absent. In 2002 there was a missionary task force of about 200,000 people.<sup>428</sup> Worldwide Christianity (all-inclusive) is roughly counting 2 billion people. This translates to 1 missionary sent out per 10,000 believers. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves and pray for a new outpouring of the Missionary Spirit!

Then we read about the Day of the Lord,<sup>429</sup> a term we also see in other prophets,<sup>430</sup> referring to judgment on the Gentiles as well as on unfaithful Israel.<sup>431</sup> It is our responsibility as missionaries to warn all people that the Day of the Lord comes, with its judgment.

One of the characteristics of the Day of the Lord is that the heavenly bodies no longer function normally.<sup>432</sup> It also reminds us of the plagues of Egypt<sup>433</sup> as was argued earlier.<sup>434</sup>

A number of *Messianic references* (‘My servant David’; ‘one nation under one King’) speak also about restoration for Israel, in the coming millennium of peace.<sup>435</sup> More cryptic descriptions seem to refer to the same happening.<sup>436</sup> In a wider, more spiritual sense, these passages may also refer to the Church. Some of the *revelationary aspects* of Ezekiel can be seen once comparisons are drawn with the book of Revelation, i.e.:

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<sup>428</sup> P.J. Johnstone, *Operation World*, 2001:752

<sup>429</sup> Ez. 30:2

<sup>430</sup> E.g. Is. 2:12-17; Joel 1:15; 2:1,2; Am. 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:7,14-18

<sup>431</sup> J.B. Taylor, Tyndale Commentaries, *Ezekiel*, 1976:202

<sup>432</sup> Ez. 32:6-8; Is. 13:10; Joel 2:30,31; 3:15; Amos 8:9; Matt. 24:29,30; Rev. 6:12,13

<sup>433</sup> Ex. 7:20-24; 10:21-23; Taylor, 1976:209

<sup>434</sup> See /1 of this chapter

<sup>435</sup> Ez. 34:23,24; 37:22-28

<sup>436</sup> 17:22-24; 21:25-27; 34:25-30

<b>Ezekiel</b>	<b>Topic described in Revelation</b>	<b>Revelation</b>
1:28	The Rainbow	4: 3
1: 5-10; 10	Four living Creatures, full of eyes	4: 6- 9
2: 9 – 3: 3	The scroll to be eaten	10: 2, 8-10
8: 2	A Man, like glowing metal	1: 13,15
38 & 39	Gog and Magog	20: 7-10
40 – 48	Plans for the New Jerusalem	21 & 22

The message of the Gospel, *including its eschatological aspects*, i.e. the return of Christ and the promises of His millennial rule on earth and then the New Heavens and the New Earth should always form part and parcel of the missionary's approach of any people group: in the present misery there is hope for the future, for all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved. This New Testament message is well-illustrated in the prophets of the Old Testament.

### *Study Questions*

1. *What two extremities do we see in Ezekiel's message?*
2. *Ezekiel's main ministry was to the ...*
3. *How did God describe Ezekiel's function?*
4. *What are the two characteristic formulae in the book?*
5. *Which three groups of messages do we see in the book?*
6. *What other Bible book will help us to understand Ezekiel's eschatological elements?*

## 5. *Daniel*

The eschatological expectation of world missions is the coming Kingdom of God, ruled by Christ and His glorified Church: the saints of all times and all places, representing ‘every nation, tribe, people and language’.<sup>437</sup> Daniel and his friends were cross-cultural missionaries to the Babylonians. This was quite a step further than where Israel had been before, in being an example to the nations, with the exception maybe, of David’s and Solomon’s glory-years. Therefore, all prophetic, apocalyptic and eschatological elements we find in the book of Daniel<sup>438</sup> should be looked at in the perspective of New Testament revelation and with that, discover their meaning for missionaries of the last days, especially since Daniel says that ‘in the end of time knowledge will increase’.<sup>439</sup>

Although parts in this 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the book are not too difficult to understand because keys for interpretation are given, there are also harder passages. Their core may well be the prophecy about the ‘seventy sevens’,<sup>440</sup> divided into 7, 62 and 1 week of 7 years each, the last being divided into two. Let me suggest some keys:

*Firstly*, Daniel and his friends are a *type* of the Body of Christ: they were a stabilizing factor in the midst of a turbulent sea of secular, idolatrous life in the context of an ethnic melting-pot – and came forth as undisputed victors. Daniel saw a new, post-Babylonian kingdom appear under leadership of Darius the Mede that can be seen as a type of the Kingdom of God, coming to bloom in its millennial expression on earth. This makes Darius a type of Jesus Christ in His *second* coming.

This typology points *forward* to the actual big event, the fall of Babylon the Great,<sup>441</sup> followed by the appearance of Jesus Christ, the rider on the white horse with His followers.<sup>442</sup> It is also significant that Darius the Mede

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<sup>437</sup> Rev. 7:9

<sup>438</sup> Mainly chapters Dan. 7-12

<sup>439</sup> 12:4

<sup>440</sup> 9:24-27

<sup>441</sup> Rev. 17 & 18

<sup>442</sup> 19:11-16

became king *at the age of 62*.<sup>443</sup> In this he is a type of Jesus Christ in His *first* coming: there were 62 generations between Adam and Christ, 10 from Adam to Noah, 10 from Noah to Abraham, 14 from Abraham to David, 14 from David until the exile and 14 from the exile to Christ.<sup>444</sup>

In the conspiracy against Daniel,<sup>445</sup> a type can be seen of the insurrection against the people of God at the end of the Millennium, after the devil has been released.<sup>446</sup> As judgment over all Daniel's enemies was made certain by Darius, so Christ will make certain that after this final satanic revolution, He will forever do away with all trouble.

*Secondly*, there are significant *Messianic* passages: one about Christ's second coming and another about His pre-incarnate state<sup>447</sup> as Gabriel's Sender, to interpret the vision Daniel saw.<sup>448</sup>

*Thirdly*, we see prophecies about the *activities* of *Antichrist*. If we compare the mentioning of the little horn with the big mouth<sup>449</sup> with the corresponding verses in Revelation<sup>450</sup> (the final judgment over it), we recognize the same person. The book of Daniel still adds a vivid descriptive dimension to the picture.<sup>451</sup>

More verses in Daniel refer prophetically to the Antichrist,<sup>452</sup> just like there is one about judgment on him.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Dan. 5:30

<sup>444</sup> Matt. 1:17; see also: Bailey, *Daniel*, 1993:54,56

<sup>445</sup> Dan. 6

<sup>446</sup> Rev. 20:7-10

<sup>447</sup> Dan. 7:13,14 & 8:15,16 respectively

<sup>448</sup> 8:1-14

<sup>449</sup> 7:8,11

<sup>450</sup> Rev. 13:5,6; 19:20

<sup>451</sup> Dan. 7:20,21,24-26

<sup>452</sup> 9:26b,27; 11:36-45; 12:11

<sup>453</sup> 8:25b; compare 2 Thess. 2:8 with Dan. 9:27b; 9:24b-26a speaks about Christ's first coming

Daniel also describes a *type of Antichrist*.<sup>454</sup> That was Antiochus IV Epiphanes.<sup>455</sup> He is called a ‘master of intrigue’.<sup>456</sup> This man overran the temple,<sup>457</sup> took away the daily sacrifices and offered a pig on the altar. After this abomination the Maccabees revolted against him and drove him out. After their victory, Judas Maccabeus cleansed the temple.<sup>458</sup> In the Jewish calendar this was 2,300 days later.<sup>459</sup>

The beauty of chapter 11 is that it gives a detailed description of the post-Greek, pre-Roman kingdoms of the Ptolemies (kings of the South) and the Seleucids (kings of the North), which was prophesied more than 200 years before it took place. This may be the best proof of how God not only knows the end from the beginning,<sup>460</sup> but also about how He lets His prophets know these things in exact detail before they come to pass.<sup>461</sup>

In the history that followed, a similar scenario was seen at the time that the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem,<sup>462</sup> and once again a comparable but more horrible fulfillment of these prophecies will be seen at the end of time.

*Finally*, believers in a pre-tribulation rapture theory should consider the texts where the saints are overcome by Antichrist.<sup>463</sup> Some argue that these are the Jews who were not converted at the time of the rapture but got to know the Lord (how?) after that event. The Scriptures seem to offer no support for that thought.

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<sup>454</sup> 8:9-14 & 23-26

<sup>455</sup> A Seleucid king (‘the king of the north’) who ruled from 175-163 BC

<sup>456</sup> Dan. 8:23; 11:21-32a

<sup>457</sup> On 15 August 171 BC

<sup>458</sup> On 25 December 165 BC

<sup>459</sup> Dan. 8:14; Bailey, op. cit. 1993:79

<sup>460</sup> Is. 46:10

<sup>461</sup> Am. 3:7

<sup>462</sup> Under Titus, in 70 AD

<sup>463</sup> Dan. 7:21,25; 8:12,24b; 12:7b; Rev. 13:7

### *Study Questions*

1. *Describe the eschatological expectation of world missions.*
2. *Daniel and his friends are a type of ...*
3. *Darius the Mede was a type of Christ in His second coming, because ...*
4. *Darius was a type of Christ in His first coming, because ...*
5. *What, still future event, typifies the conspiracy against Daniel?*
6. *Explain how Antichrist's person is prophesied about in the book of Daniel and what ruler provided an in-between fulfillment of that prophecy.*
7. *Which two kingdoms are prophesied about in Daniel 11?*

## Other Books by Steef van 't Slot

*World Evangelisation – That All May Hear*, Hebron Press, Benoni, South Africa, 1999/2005, re-published by Recruiting for Missions, 2012.

This book is also available in French under the title *Evangelisation du Monde – Que Tous Puissent Entendre*, 2013

Both *World Evangelisation* and *The Bible's Missionary Message, Part 1 – The Old Testament* can be ordered on line as Print on Demand at: <http://www.bijbelkiosk.nl/english-books>

Books are printed on demand through the Print Location Network of BookPal Limited –[www.bookpal.co.uk](http://www.bookpal.co.uk)- at several locations worldwide.

*Biblical Foundation for World Missions*, Hebron Press, Benoni, South Africa, 2005. This book is out of print, but still available as MS WORD document. Should you be interested, you can contact the author at [recruiting4missions@gmail.com](mailto:recruiting4missions@gmail.com)

This book was the basis for the three volumes of *The Bible's Missionary Message*, of which part one and two are published in 2014.

*Biblical Mission Stories*, a Theology of Missions Course for Oral Learners, 2007. This course was not published as a book but translated into an East-Asian majority language where it is used to train cross-cultural missionaries. This document is also available in MS WORD format.

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## Recruiting for Missions

The Foundation 'Recruiting for Missions' was established in The Netherlands in 2010, as a legal entity to a ministry that was founded in 1998 and started by Dutch missionaries, Steef & Tineke van 't Slot, who, until 2006 worked in and from South Africa.

This ministry seeks to mobilize churches, mainly in the Global South, to participate in the execution of Christ's great commission. It helps them recruit and train cross-cultural missionaries to people groups in their countries and on their continents that are unreached or least-reached with the gospel; and with the training of Christian workers for children's ministry.

This is done through development of theological and missiological materials, that can be taught in the form of weekly modules (20-30 hours), suitable for churches, Bible schools, theological seminaries, retreats, missionary training centers, etc.

Available modules: Introduction to Missions (*World Evangelisation – That All May Hear*) and *The Bible's Missionary Message* (three volumes, one on the OT and two on the NT), as well as a course for child workers. Teaching takes place upon invitation, to be sent to [recruiting4missions@gmail.com](mailto:recruiting4missions@gmail.com)

The Foundation operates on unsolicited gifts. It pays no salaries; funds are spent on development and production of teaching materials. It does include travel costs of itinerant faculty.

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