



# God's people guide the nations

**Aim:** to motivate God's people today in the Servant role of concern for God's name among people where he is not yet known.

**Picture a signpost, pointing 'to God'**

**Bible focus: Genesis 12:1-3**

- Additional: Gen 1:28, 3:15, 4:26, 9:7,11, 11, 17:3-8, 18:17-18, 22:15-18, 22:18, 26:2-4, 26:4, 28:13-15, 35:11-12, 46:3, Ex 3:6-8, 6:2-8, Josh 8:33a, 35, Is 25:6, 41:8-10, 42:6, 49:3, 52:13, 56:5, Rom 4:3,16,17; Gal 3
- God's heart loves the nations - so he chose his people Israel to guide the other nations to him, Adam & Eve (Gen 1:28), Seth (Gen 4:26), Noah (Gen 9:7,11).
- His purpose was to bless the whole world. His call was from the individual to a family; from the family, to a nation; from the nation, to a Messiah (Gen 3:15)
- God formed a community, the people of God, the family of God, in contrast to the spirit of Babel (Gen 11). They tried to establish a name independent of God, boasting self-achievement
- God's people are called to bless the nations in the name of God, displaying God's character and sharing his blessings

**The people of Israel in the OT are a picture of the people of the church today. These three stages represent the pattern of God's dealing with his people**

## 1. Call

- Abram; a pattern of how God calls us from the world to follow him, and to seek and to save the lost:
  - God's initiative
  - not for personal benefit alone, but to bless others
  - choosing the weak over the great and famous
  - looking for a response of trust (Rom 4:3,16,17; Gal 3)
- Abram is the father of those who live by faith, the saints of the OT (Jonah, Daniel, Nehemiah) and of the NT
- We all need to hear God's call: *ekklesia* = God's called-out people, the church

## 2. Covenant

*Distinguishes Israel from other nations with their local gods.*

**Its essence**

- Core relationship of the covenant: "I will be your God and you will be my people". A bond between God and his people; a close relationship, involved in their lives, called and led by him. His law & sacrifices show his holiness, the lamb pictures Jesus.
- The ten commandments, not arbitrary rules but marks of this relationship, expressing God's unchanging character
  - commitment to God; loyalty, belonging to God
  - commitment to one another; community, belonging to one another
- God's purpose: the restoration of his blessing on all humankind (Gen 1:28)

### The promises

- Repeated to Abraham several times (Gen 17:3–8, 18:17–18, 22:15–18, 22:18), later to Isaac (Gen 26:2–4, 26:4), to Jacob (Gen 28:13–15, 35:11–12, 46:3) & Moses (Ex 3:6–8, 6:2–8)
- A family relationship, God as father. A marriage relationship, God as husband, the church as his bride
- Neither in OT nor in NT is God's family to be inward-looking and protective of its own interests alone

### Non-Israelites

- Welcomed into the community eg Ruth, the covenant relationship is on God's terms, circumcision is its sign
- God's people are not to exclude others but to be a light to outsiders and draw the world to God (Josh 8:33a, 35)
- Israel to show God's love for all nations, to be welcoming and to show God's servant character (Is 56:5). Not making a name for themselves, but given an everlasting name

## 3. Servant role

### A servant

- God's covenant people are to be a servant nation to his world. cf Isaiah Servant Songs, fulfilled imperfectly by Israel, perfectly in Christ (Is 41:8–10, 49:3). Israel is a light for the nations (Is 42:6)

### The prophets

- Brought not their own but God's word to the people of God and to the world
  - sense of God's call to Israel to be who they ought to be
  - awareness of God's purposes, 'seers', to bless all the peoples of the world
  - reminding God's people of his covenant, calling them to commitment of true worship and a moral life
  - strong ethical and social concern [Israel's ups and downs]
- Isaiah himself responded to God's call: *Here am I Lord, send me!*
- The prophecies of Isaiah are full of God's purposes to bless the world through his people (Is 25:6, 52:13 as a picture of Jesus)

### What does it mean for us, the people of God, today?

God still has a heart for the nations and calls his people to take the saving name of Jesus to the whole world. Whose name are we concerned for?

- Our own name, like the people of Babel ?
- Trusting & obeying God's name, like Abram, when moved out of our comfort zone ?
- God's name is his character, showing him by living like Jesus Christ ?
- The name of Jesus, telling the lost about him, like the Servant he himself was ?

We ourselves cannot reach the whole world, but we can respond to God's call to take the light of Jesus into dark places, battling in prayer and being open to new ways to serve.