

Genesis to Revelation: God's Heart for the World

by Todd Ahrend

What verses come to mind when you think of the word, "MISSIONS"? Most of us are hard pressed to name more than the old faithful Great Commission. For years our church culture has singled out this passage to be the theme of our missions conferences and the motivation for those who go. It's no wonder that our obedience is slow - who wants to hang their future on one verse? The Bible has a lot more to say on this subject than just the Great Commission. We need to understand the concept of a Biblical basis for missions. Maybe you're saying, "The Biblical basis, is there one?" YES! And not only that, but missions permeates every book of the Bible. It is in fact the theme of the Bible. If you don't believe that all 66 books can be reduced to one theme, keep reading. You will see that missions is not your pastor's idea, or your campus minister's idea, or even your idea...it is God's. Since creation, God has been interested in redeeming all peoples to Himself. As Christians, it is vital that we see the world as He sees it.

Let's look at the Bible in light of God's heart for the world, and we will see that from Genesis to the Revelation He is beckoning you and I and all of His people to join Him in bringing every people group to His throne. The Bible is not a collection of separate books with no common theme or story. It is one book with an

Introduction: Genesis 1-11,
a Plot: Genesis 12 - Jude,
and a Conclusion: Revelation.

Let us begin where God begins, in Genesis.

Genesis 1:28 "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth...""

This is an interesting command. Be fruitful and multiply. Now why wouldn't God just want the Garden of Eden populated? Why the whole earth? Because God knew that as Adam would populate physically, he would also populate spiritually. Can you picture that? The planet covered with worshippers of Him as Adam and Eve "filled the earth." However, we know that by Genesis 3 sin had crept in and by chapter 8 the world was not looking good. So as God floods the earth and starts over, listen to the command He gives Noah, just after he steps off the ark.

Genesis 9:1 "Then God blessed Noah and his sons saying to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.""

"Hey Noah, don't just populate a city, fill the earth." There it is again, the command to multiply. So as we come to chapter 11 there should be one simple question on all of our minds: Does God get the earth filled? Lets keep reading,

Genesis 11: 1-4 "Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there...Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.""

Can't you hear the talk of the town? "Ya know, we all look the same, act the same, talk the same, eat the same, and dress the same. Lets just stay right here and make a name for ourselves. Do

we really want to be scattered?" This does not exactly sound like they are excited about obeying God's command. Because of man's urge to settle, God is forced to step in and scatter, filling the earth just as He desired.

Genesis 11:7-8 "Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.' So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city."

So as we end the introduction we see that God has a problem: people scattered all over the earth speaking many different languages. How is He going to reach all of them? What will He do? Who will He use? The plot begins.

Genesis 12:1-3 "The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you...I will bless you...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'"

Hey Abram, leave. Leave your country, your people, your family, your life, your dreams, your ambitions, your future as well as all that you know and are familiar with and go to the land I will show you. Now if you keep reading, something really weird happens...

Genesis 12:4 "So Abram left, as the Lord had told him."

He leaves. Man obeys God. This is a pretty weird concept especially in today's world. So Abram is off to establish a nation that will bless all peoples. Interestingly, this command was not for Abram alone. Watch God continue to call succeeding generations to reach all nations. Next in line is Abraham's son, Isaac.

Genesis 26:4 "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."

And to Isaac's son, Jacob:

Genesis 28:14 "Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring"

The rest of the Old Testament is filled with God using Israel to make His name great among the nations. Here are just a few examples:

The 10 Commandments

Deuteronomy 4:5-6 "Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"

His reputation spread after parting the Red Sea

Joshua 2:9-10 "I (Rahab) know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us...we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt..."

Solomon and his wisdom

1 Kings 4:34 "Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom."

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace

Daniel 3:29 "Therefore, I (Nebuchadnezzar) decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces... for no other God can save in this way."

Daniel in the lions' den

Daniel 6:26 "I (Darius) issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel..."

For further study see Psalm 33:13-14, 67:1-7, 86:9-10, 96:3; Isaiah 11:9-10, 49:6, 52:10, 61:11; Jonah 4:11, Habakkuk 1:5, Zephaniah 2:11, Haggai 2:7, Zechariah 8:20-23, Malachi 1:11

As we transition to the New Testament the plot only thickens. Now Christ, God in flesh, enters the scene and what do we see in the pattern of His life and ministry? Nothing different. Whether it is taking a longer route to reach a Samaritan women (John 4:1-42) or healing various Gentiles to teach His followers (Mark 5:1-20, 7:24-30). Christ in the New Testament maintained the pattern established in the Old Testament. Here are a few more examples.

Clearing the temple

Mark 11:15-17 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area designated for the Gentiles to worship and he found people buying and selling there. As He drove them out saying "Is it not written; 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'?"

The sign of His return

Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

Jesus' ministry

Luke 4:42-43 "...they tried to keep him from leaving them but He said, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.'"

The mandate to His followers

Mark 16:15 "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

The book of Acts is a testimony of the account of the gospel spreading to the ends of the earth. It begins with Jesus echoing what He had taught the disciples for the past 3 years.

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

As the persecution begins so does the scattering (Acts 8:1), and the Lord adds great numbers to their missionary force.

Acts 9:15 "...Go! This man (Paul) is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles..."

The rest of the book of Acts and Epistles give a detailed description of Paul and the rest of the missionary band struggling to raise up churches all over the world.

For further study see Matthew 9:35-38, 28:18-20; John 20:21, Romans 10:11-15, 15:20; Galatians 3:13-14, I Timothy 2:4-6, II Peter 3:9, I John 2:2

The introduction: Genesis 1-11, the plot: Genesis 12-Jude, so what is the conclusion?

Revelation 7:9 "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb..."

It is important to connect what is happening in Revelation with what God started in Genesis 12 in the life of Abraham. God will do it. There will be a representative from every nation, tribe, people, and language bowing and worshipping at His feet. Heaven is multicultural. God is a missionary God, and from cover to cover He is showing us His mission. Will you join Him in bringing a representative from every people group to His throne? It will happen, the only question is will you be a part?