

HOLY NATION¹

In what way is being 'a holy nation' central to living life as a Christian?
A holy nation has a speaking, testifying role, as we shall see (1Peter 2:9).

I think one reason why the wider community gets cranky with the followers of Jesus, is that the church has the unique role of freely serving nations ('to make everyone see', and 'bring to light' the plan of God, and the mystery of Christ – Ephesians 3:9), with something they do really need, but (often in pride and hostility), do not want. This 'loving darkness rather than light' factor (John 3:19) is often the unspoken 'elephant in the room'. Sinful humanity tries to govern the world, autonomously, without reference to, and without being contingently, bonded to God in a King, Christ Jesus (Psalm 2).

The word 'HOLY' does not primarily mean 'pure', or 'separated'. **It means something more like 'devoted to the LORD'**.² And the Lord, firstly is the one devoted to us, his people. 'You shall be my people. And I will be your God'.

The biblical idea of 'NATION' refers to, but is not confined to 'nation states' (like Australia, or Spain, or Canada or America). Nor is it just limited to 'tribes' and 'language groups' and culture groups, nor 'people groups' either (Matthew 28:19; 25:32). This has long been held by many Christian Missionaries. ³

A 'holy nation' refers to *the kingdom* "under God". The notion begins with one nation, Israel. It refers to them, being in an economic, political and social structure, that **models** what it is like to live under God's reign. The church, which serves the Kingdom, is not the Kingdom of God. However the idea of being a holy nation, refers to the new people of God, under Christ. It means to be a people, that are under the King. And the community under Christ models economic, political and social aspects of life in this new kingdom of God:

- (1) It is primarily to listen to the Living Covenantal God speaking to us. It means being formed and kept by grace (Ephesians 2:1-10; 4:1; 17-32).
- (2) It means living ethically in the way that God requires, by grace (Ex. 20:1-21).
- (3) It involves showing genuine care and concern for the broken and disenfranchised in society.
- (4) It involves prayer to the God who truly is able to help. It also means to be a voice for those too weak or too downcast, to cry out (Micah 6:6-8; James 1:27).

¹ One Study in the Series: (1) Holy Trinity, (2) Holy Nation, (3) Holy Spirit, (4) Holy City

² Stephen J. Wellum and Peter J. Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, p. 325, 'The basic meaning is not "separated" but rather "consecrated to" or "devoted to"'.
<https://www.amazon.com/Kingdom-through-Covenant-Second-Biblical-Theological/dp/1433553074>

³ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad (3rd Ed.)*, Baker Academic, p. 217. Donald McGavran convinced a world Missions conference in the 1970's that taking the gospel to the 'nations' in the Bible means ethnic groups. And it excludes the idea of nation states. Karl Barth certainly knew the bad side of evil nations states, such as Germany under Hitler, seeking some sort of pseudo-validation. I disagree however, with John Piper and Karl Barth, and agree with Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Book That Made Your World*, that while 'nationalism' has become a 'dirty word' (p. 174), it still has a validity when under one government [such as India] (Acts 17:26). India was undoubtedly blessed when the good news of Abraham's true God came to them (Gen. 12:1-3). Vishal argues that it affected their language, law, police, justice and court system, botanic gardens, library etc.

We can develop our understanding further from applying Peter's words:

*'... You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a **holy nation**, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light'. (1Peter 2:9).*

Peter's understanding was not immediate. It developed from walking with Jesus, denying him, seeing him get crucified, witnessing him resurrected as Victor over all; and then, thinking back through what God told Moses to tell his people, Israel:

*You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be **my treasured possession** among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:4-6).*

Application

The Lord God, is deeply devoted to his people, to us, to you.

He establishes the New Covenant. He ever works as faithful Creator (1Peter 4:19)

Are you devoted to the Lord?

How might you reassess your devotional life in 2020?

God truly desires for us to help the nations to be glad, and sing for joy (Psalm 67:4).

We pray for God's blessing *that (or 'so that')* God's way may be known on earth.

Open your Bible, to Psalm 67, read and ask: *'Lord, how do I get with the program?'*

Psalm 67. To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

- 1 May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
- 2 *that* your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.
- 3 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
- 4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*
- 5 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
- 6 The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
- 7 May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Prayer: Living Lord, devoted to your people, thank you for the beauty of 'a people' devoted to you, and your program for the nations, to bring blessing, hope and redemption. Amen.