

The Ingathering of the Nations

I. The nations are excluded from God's people

- The default for everyone in Adam's line: to share in his guilt and to expect judgment (Rom 5:16; 1 Cor 15:22).
- Babel as a picture of what people do if left to themselves: intense opposition to God (Gen 11:1–9).
- Out of the nations, God chooses one man: Abram. God creates a new nation out of a man who was as good as dead (Gen 15:2–3; Rom 4:19).
- Yet from the very beginning Abram was the hope of the nations (Gen 12:3).
- In the old covenant, the nation of Israel was equivalent to his people: need for circumcision (Gen 17:10–14); exclusion for apostasy (Deut 13).
- To be outside Israel was to be an enemy of God. The great enemies of God's people are foreign nations: Egypt, Amalek, Canaanites, Aram, Assyria, Babylon.

II. Yet individuals from the nations can still become part of God's people

- In order to do so, they needed to renounce their own nation and gods, and become part of Israel (in the case of males, this means circumcision).
 - Exod 12:48: "If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; *he shall be as a native of the land.*"
- Rahab the harlot (her creed: Josh 2:9–13): part of the messianic line! (Matt 1:5)
- Ruth the Moabitess: [Ruth to Naomi] "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). Also part of the messianic line! (Ruth 4:22; Matt 1:5)
- Others: the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:9–24); Uriah *the Hittite* (2 Sam 11:11); Ebed-melech (an Ethiopian eunuch who delivered Jeremiah from a pit; Jer 38:7–13); the Rechabites (see Jer 35; 1 Chr 2:55).
- Some fuzziness regarding people like Naaman (2 Kgs 5), Job, etc.

III. God disowns Israel because of their sin

- In his impartiality, God judges his people like any other nation:
 - Jer 5:9, 29; 9:9: "Shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?"
 - Jer 9:24–25: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh—Egypt, *Judah*, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab...for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart."
- Judah as actually worse than the nations: Jer 2:10–11: "For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing. Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit."
- Judgment begins with the household of God, but will be universal.
 - Jer 25:31: God enters into judgment with all flesh.
 - Many prophets have a section called the "oracles against the nations": Isa 13–21, 23; Jer 46–51; Ezek 25–32, 35; Amos 1–2; Obadiah; Nahum
- God scatters Israel and Judah among the nations, "divorcing" them, such that they lose their special privileges of worship, dwelling on the land.
- God appoints pagan kings (Nebuchadnezzar [Jer 25:9; 27:6–7], then Cyrus [Isa 44:28–45:6]) to be his vassals in place of David.

IV. God promises renewal for Israel *and* for the nations

- God promises to save the nations, not just Israel.
 - Isa 49:6: “I will make you [the servant] as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”
 - Jer 12:15: “And after I have plucked [the nations] up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land.”
- The nations will come to worship.
 - Ps 22:27: “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.”
 - Jer 3:17: “At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart” (see Isa 2:2–3; 56:6–8; 60:11–14; Micah 4:1–2; Zech 14:16–19).
- They will truly repent, saying, “Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit” (Jer 16:19).
- They will be reckoned as God’s own people: Isa 19:24–25 “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.”
- But not all gentiles: the nations will also fight the church (Ps 2; Ezek 38–39).

V. God redefines and expands “Israel” in Christ to include the nations

- The nations are now included in the people of God. No circumcision needed.
 - Eph 2:11–22: “For [Jesus] ... has made us [Jew and Gentile] both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.”
 - We are engrafted into the one tree, which includes old and new covenant believers (Rom 11:17–22).
- The nations are reckoned as children/heirs of Abraham.
 - Gal 3:29: “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” (see Rom 8:17; Gal 4:28; Eph 3:6).
 - We are the true Israel (Gal 6:16); the true Jews (Rom 2:29).
 - Jer 31:31: The new covenant is to be made with Judah and Israel. Yet when Jesus comes, it is with all nations.
- The word “gentile” now refers to unbelievers (1 Pet 2:12; 4:3) who unite themselves against the church.
 - Acts 4:27 identifies the opponents of the messiah in Psalm 2 as both Jews and Gentiles (notice how Rev 3:9 uses Isa 49:23; 60:14).
- We need to gather in all nations before Jesus returns.
 - Matt 28:18–20 make disciples of all nations (see also Matt 24:14).
 - Every tribe will gather around the Lamb’s throne (Rev 5:9; 7:9).

VI. Applications

- Be humble! Apart from the work of Jesus, you would have no claim on the promises to Abraham (Eph 2:12).
- Fight the evil of racism: there is one human race and one plan of salvation for all peoples.
- Welcome the outsider: God loves those who seem impossibly lost.
- Embrace and support foreign missions: it is God’s great goal in this present time.