TENNENT CHAPTER 4: THE GOD OF MISSION REVEALS HIS PLAN

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Category: Reviews

The Bible story is not about a generic god, but about the personal God who actively engages with human history, with a mission. This is why missions is ultimately about God rather than about man.

> *â€œMission refers to Godâ€™s redemptive, historical initiative on behalf of is creation.â€*

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The Covenant with Abraham and the Tower of Babel

Genesis 12 is the cornerstone of Godâ€™s relationship with Israel. Paul talks about it as God preaching the gospel in advance (Gal 3:8).

The covenant has to be seen in the context of earlier chapters: the fall, flood and Babel.

Babel is an important backdrop to Genesis 12:

- The settled people wanted to build a tower to the sky.
- The purpose of the tower was to make a name for themselves.
- The event has a global impact. The narrative talks about the whole earth five times â€“ this is a counterpoint to Godâ€™s promised blessing of the nations in Genesis 12.

The covenant with Abraham is simultaneously personal and global; local and universal.

The people at Babel wanted to make a name for themselves, but God promises to make a name for Abraham. The city and tower were to prevent people from being scattered, but God scattered them and gathered a nation together through Abraham.

The whole world was to be blessed through Abraham: all of the families or kinship groups. We should not think this refers to â€˜nationsâ€™ in the sense of modern political entities.

The blessing has a threefold pattern; Abraham, his family, the world.

This threefold pattern is repeated with Isaac and Jacob.

Three Key Themes in the Abrahamic Covenant

- God is the Source and Initiator of Mission
- Yahweh is a Sending God
    - Sending has a purpose â€“ it is an extension of the will of the sender
    - Sending is associated with authority
    - There is a reluctance to disobey

    - Sending often involves the use of messengers
- The Covenant Reveals Godâ€™s Heart for All Nations

It is important to notice that the locus of Godâ€™s work is the nation â€“ the community â€“ not the individual.

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Evangelical soteriology has tended to ignore the horizontal aspect of salvation and focuses solely on the individual and their relationship to God.

Godâ€™s Blessing of the Nations in the Old Testament

Godâ€™s Sovereignty over the Nations

There are dozens of texts that show that although God has a special relationship with Israel, he is still sovereign over the whole world.

Declaring Godâ€™s Glory Among the Nations

There are many passages which show that Israel was called to show Godâ€™s glory to the world. This is not something that appears only in the New Testament.

Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament

This is an area which has been covered in detail in the literature. The Jews always anticipated that God would bless the nations through the Messiah, but they did not anticipate the magnitude of the Gentilesâ€™ role in Godâ€™s plan.

The Suffering Servant Songs

These are important because of four themes:

- The servant is on a mission from God
- The mission involves vicarious suffering
- His suffering brings justice, salvation and peace to all the nations.

Reflecting on all four servant songs we see:

- God the Father is the initiating source of this redemptive mission.

- The scope of the mission is clearly global.
- Despite the opposition to Godâ€™s plan, he will use the suffering of his servant to bring justice and salvation.

Paul and the early Christians believed that Jesus was the fulfilment of these servant songs.

Eschatological Expectations

A whole Bible approach shows that the final end of the mission of God is present in seed form in the Abrahamic covenant, but it will not be realised till the eschaton. So missiology lives permanently in the now and not yet.