

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MISSION

The term *mission* describes “all of God’s sending activity” (Ott and Strauss, xv.) It “involves the very nature of God, his will for the church, and his plan for the nations...” (*ibid.*, xiii). Simply stated, “mission is about God’s sending activity in which the church participates” (*ibid.*, xxiii).

Biblical Survey

1) Creation (Genesis 1:26-28)

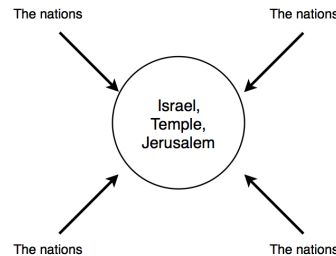
- The *imago dei* (image of God) reflects the *missio dei* (sending of God).

2) Nations (Genesis 11:4)

- The gathering of the nations at Babel pictures the ultimate rejection of the creation purpose and mandate for mankind (through “gathering” and “making a name”).
- The biblical story from Genesis 11 (the scattering of the nations) to Revelation (the gathering of the nations) “forms a grand envelope structure framing the entire story of Scripture (Scobie, *Israel and the Nations*, Tyndale Bulletin, 43(2):285). (Explained below).

3) Abraham (Genesis 12:3)

- God’s particular and strategic narrowing of the *missio dei*.
- Emphasis on 12:3c - “sinister nations and peoples of the earth, such as we read about in chs. 3–11, are to be blessed through Abraham (Hamilton, *Genesis*, vol. 1, p. 374).
- Emphasis on “centripetal focus” of *missio dei*.



The Centripetal Movement of Mission in the Old Testament

4) Israel (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:5-8; 26:18-19)

- A major part of the blessing is that Israel becomes God’s special people, a nation of priests in the midst of a whole world that belongs to God (Ex. 19:5-6).
- “Significant here for God’s missionary purposes is that Israel is not a kingdom *with* priests, but the nation itself is a kingdom *of* priests. The role of priest is that of mediation; thus Israel mediates between God and the nations” (Ott and Strauss, p. 9)
- “As Israel lives in obedience to the law of God, that is to say the Israelites live as people under the reign of God, they manifest God’s kingdom and are a holy nation. This in turn glorifies God among the nations and draws the nations to inquire about God” (Ott and Strauss, p. 10).

5) Book of Psalms (Psalm 2; 33; 66; 67; 72; 96; 98; 117; 145)

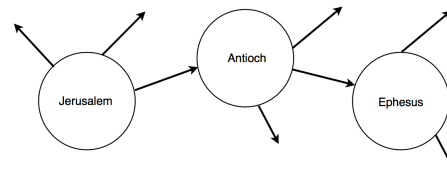
- Psalm 67 reflects Israel’s “blessed to be a blessing” status (Genesis 12:3).

6) Prophets (Isaiah 40–53; Jonah)

- Jonah (the reluctant Missionary-Prophet)
- Isaiah (the Great Internationalist)

7) Jesus and the Gospels

- Jesus proclaimed and demonstrated His own concern for the lost in Israel and the nations.
 1. Israel (Lk. 4:17-19; 19:10).
 2. Nations, or world (Jn. 3:16; 10:16).
 3. Gentiles, lepers, widows (Matt. 8:5-13; Lk. 4:25-28; Lk. 10:25; Jn. 4).
- All Gospels cite the Great Commission in some form (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:45-49; Jn. 20:21).
- Jesus Himself was sent by the Father, and the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son (*missio dei*). As the Father sent the Son and as the Father/Son sent the Spirit, so the Triune God then sends the Church (*missiones ecclesiae*).
- In the New Testament, “the movement of mission reverses from *centripetal* in the Old Testament, Israel attracting the nations to come and worship the Lord in Zion, to *centrifugal*, an explicit sending of Christ’s witnesses to the nations...” (Ott and Strauss, p. 25-26). Moreover, there also appears a decentralized movement of mission, meaning that a localized center is removed.



The Centrifugal, Decentralized Movement of Mission in the New Testament

8) Church (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21)

- “Paul seems to take for granted that the very logic of the gospel and the moving of the Holy Spirit compel the church to undertake mission apart from further explicit commands (Ott and Strauss, p. 49).
- “It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God’s mission” (Wright, *The Mission of God*, p. 62).

9) New Creation (Revelation 5:9; 7:9)

- “The closing pages of the Bible depict the new Jerusalem appearing as the center of the kingdom in the new creation, a place of infinite glory and worship in the immediate presence of the living God (Rev. 21–22). The centripetal mission of the Old Testament, which became centrifugal and decentralized in the New, now becomes once again centripetal in the consummation. The Old Testament eschatological vision of the nations coming to a new Zion is now fulfilled, but it could not have been realized without the decentralized and diffused mission to the nations of the New Testament era” (Ott and Strauss, p. 53).

10) Present Statistics