



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

The Bible's One Story 2 - Preparing a Light for the Nations

Introduction

1. To completely investigate the data regarding the Bible as one story, we could spend weeks exploring multiple issues, including:
 - a. Covenants and promises.
 - b. Jesus as the embodiment of Israel as that nation was supposed to live.
 - c. The ethics God's people should exhibit as they follow Jesus in the way God always intended.
 - d. Jesus as "the Holy One of Israel" who walked among us.¹
2. I'm going to focus on two others, and could say more than time permits about both.
 - a. The *history* that traces the plan of God as developed through both testaments.
 - b. The *mission* God intended, continued to advance, and ultimately enacted in Jesus.
3. To establish the foundation for this lesson, let's return to Luke 24 (see part 1).
 - a. Jesus told two disciples who thought his death had ended the dream that he would be Israel's redeemer (v. 21) that "it was . . . necessary" for him to suffer to be glorified as "the prophets [had] spoken." He interpreted the Scriptures from "Moses and all the Prophets" (vv. 25-27).
 - b. Later, along with the eleven and others, they heard Jesus explain the teaching of "the Law . . . Prophets and the Psalms" about himself (vv. 44-47).
 - c. We will survey the story and note some matters of application.

Body

- I. "The Law and the Prophets."²
 - A. "The Law" (Genesis-Deuteronomy).
 1. "In the beginning . . ."
 - a) A "very good" (1.31) creation, culminated by humans in God's image (Gen 1-2).
 - b) A creation spoiled by sin (Gen 3-11), resulting in separation from God (Gen 2.17; 3.14-24; cf Isa 59.1-2). Then, things went from bad to worse (Gen 4-11).
 2. Abraham [Abram]: chosen, promised, and blessed (Gen 12.1-3).
 - a) Promised to be the origin of "a great nation *so that you will be a blessing*" (v. 2).
 - b) ". . . in you *all the families of the earth shall be blessed*" (v. 3).
 3. The nation established and commissioned (Exod 19.5-6).

¹ The list in #s 1 and 2 is paraphrased from Christopher J. H. Wright's summaries of the main ideas in the chapters of his *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 277-278.

² "The Law and the Prophets" was a phrase used by ancient Jews to refer to the entirety of what we call the Old Testament (cf. Matt 7.12; 22.40; Luke 16.16; Acts 13.15; Rom 3.21).

- a) As the specific nation of promise (Abraham → Isaac → Jacob=Israel → 12 sons → 12 tribes), God acted on Israel's behalf (grace) to save them from Egypt (v. 4).
- b) He chose Israel to "be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine" (v. 5).
- c) Called to live in covenant with God as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," they were to show and exemplify the way of God to the other nations.

B. "The Prophets" (Joshua-Malachi).

1. Summary statements.³

- a) Isaiah 40-66 (and especially 40-55) is noteworthy for emphasizing the themes, and for being the source of multiple New Testament quotations and allusions.
 - (1) The section anticipates the Babylonian exile and Israel's despair over what they perceived to be God's abandonment.
 - (2) The chapters stress the LORD's sovereignty over creation and history, "but also that he is about to act again on behalf of his oppressed people with a deliverance that will recall the original exodus but dwarf its significance" (Wright, 33).
 - (3) Isaiah also declares Israel's true ministry and mission as God's servant: although Israel had failed to bring his blessing to all nations, he promised that the task would be accomplished through a personal Servant of the LORD.
- b) "The *particular* story of tiny Israel and the *universal* purposes of God are again linked together" (Wright, 34).

2. We will briefly examine three of the five "Servant Songs."⁴

- a) 42.1-7, 8-9.
 - (1) The LORD's "servant," who was the LORD's "chosen" and "delight," will have his "Spirit upon him" (v. 1).
 - (2) "... he will [faithfully] bring forth justice to the *nations*" (vv. 1, 3-4); the meaning of "justice" in Israelite thought is illustrated in v. 7 (cf. 61.8).
 - (3) "... the *coastlands* will wait for his law" (v. 4), a reference to the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, indicating the remotest peoples of the earth.⁵
 - (4) Notice the role and mission of the Servant in v. 6: "I will give *you as a covenant* for the people, *a light for the nations*." (On "covenant," cf. 49.8.)
 - (5) These are some of the "*new things* I now declare, before they spring forth" (v. 9).
- b) 49.1-9.
 - (1) The servant will be "glorified" (v. 3).⁶
 - (2) The mission is:
 - (a) Not only for the restoration and salvation of Jacob's tribes and the remnant of Israel; that "is too light a thing" (v. 6).
 - (b) But to be "*a light to the nations*" so that the LORD's "salvation may reach to the *end of the earth*" (v. 6; also 7-8).

³ The point can also be illustrated from the Psalms and other writing prophets; time requires limiting our scope.

⁴ Because of specific references to an individual "servant," four passages are identified as "Servant Songs" (Isaiah 42.1-7; 49.1-9; 50.4-11; 52.13-53.12); 61.1-3 is similar, but "servant" is not explicit in that passage. See Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 528.

Since this is a survey, I have chosen to omit 50.4-11 and 52.13-53.12, along with the latter's preceding context in 52.1-12. Per the lists in indices in the United Bible Society Greek Text (4th rev. ed.), 52.13-53.12 is cited in Matt 8.17; Luke 22.37; John 12.38; Acts 8.32-33; Rom 10.16; 15.21; and 1 Pet 2.22. The editors also list more than 30 allusions and verbal parallels to it.

⁵ Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1315.

⁶ Compare the theme of Jesus being "glorified" that runs through John (7.39; 11.4; 12.16, 23, 28; 13.31-32; 14.13; 17.4, 10).

- c) 61.1-3, 4-11.
 - (1) "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (v. 1).
 - (2) "... to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, to *comfort* all who mourn; . . ." (v. 2).
 - (3) In the time of restoration, "you shall be called *priests* of the LORD" (cf. v. 10; 66.21; Exod 19.6 → 1 Pet 2.5, 9; Rev 1.6; 5.10; 20.6), and "*eat the wealth of the nations*" (v. 6).
 - (4) "Their offspring shall be known *among the nations* . . ." (v. 9).
 - (5) "... the Lord GOD will cause *righteousness and praise* to sprout up before all the *nations*" (v. 11).

II. Notable Isaiah References in Luke-Acts.

A. Luke.

1. When Joseph and Mary presented the infant Jesus in Jerusalem, they were met by Simeon.
 - a) He was "waiting for the *consolation* (παράκλησις, *paraklēsis*) of Israel," the hope that God would rescue and *comfort* his people (v. 25; cf. LXX Isa 40.1-2, 11; 49.13; 61.2; 66.13).
 - b) By revelation, he had been told he would not die until he had seen "the Lord's Christ" (v. 26).
 - c) While holding Jesus in his arms, he said, "my eyes have seen your *salvation*. . . prepared in the presence of all *peoples*, . . ." (vv. 30-31).
 - d) "... a *light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel*" (v. 32; from Isa 42.6; 49.6).
2. 4.18-21 - Jesus said that his ministry had "fulfilled" (πληρῶω, *plēroō*) Isaiah 61.1-2, and that God would include people besides Israel (vv. 25-27), as well as outcasts generally (cf. 7.18-23; Isa 35.4-10).
3. 9.31 - Luke's account of the transfiguration is part of a section (9.18-36) that establishes the theme for Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (9.51-19.44).
 - a) Only Luke records what was discussed at the transfiguration: "he spoke of his departure (ἐξοδος, *exodos*), which he was about to accomplish (πληρῶω, *plēroō*; "fulfill") at Jerusalem" (v. 31; cf. Matt 17.3; Mark 9.4).

B. Acts.

1. 3.11-26 -- Peter's second sermon, in the temple.
 - a) He tied Jesus' work to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the fathers (v. 13).
 - b) Jesus is identified as "his *servant* (παῖς, *pais*)" (v. 13, 26; cf. LXX Isa 42.1; 49.6; 52.13).
 - c) He called Jesus "the Holy and Righteous One" (v. 14).⁷
 - d) He said that Jesus' suffering was expected by the prophets (v. 18).
 - e) His service was tied to God's work at "restoring all the things" spoken by the "prophets long ago" (v. 21).
 - f) Jesus was the expected "prophet like Moses" (v. 22; Deut 18.15, 18-19).
 - g) As declared by the prophets, all this was part of completing the covenant made with Abraham, as first spoken in Gen 12.3 (cited in v. 25).

⁷ See the multiple references to God in Isaiah as "the Holy One of Israel," especially in chs. 40-66: 41.14, 16, 20; 43.3, 14; 45.11; 47.4; 48.17; 49.7 [servant song]; 54.5; 55.5; 60.9, 14.

2. 13.47 - Paul's synagogue sermon in Acts 13.16-41 followed a similar path as Peter's; when jealous Jews challenged him, he announced he was turning to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 28.25-28).⁸
 - a) He defended his action from Isaiah 49.6, cited in v. 47.
3. 26.23 - Paul told Agrippa that the Jews sought to kill him because he was taking the gospel to Gentiles (vv. 18-21), but defended his action by saying that the prophets and Moses had spoken of Christ's suffering and the proclamation of "light both to our people and to the Gentiles," alluding to Isaiah 42.6; 49.6.

III. Two Matters of Application.

- A. All in the church are part of expanded Israel.
 1. In Romans, Paul faced the challenges of showing that God had kept his promise to Israel in Jesus and how his own ministry to the Gentiles fit into that plan.
 2. Romans 9.4-5 affirm that the promises and all that attended to them did indeed belong to the Israelites.
 3. Romans 9.6-8 affirm that Gentiles who believe in Jesus, the "offspring" promised to Abraham (cf. Gal 3.16, 19), were also "children of Abraham," "children of the promise" who "are truly Israel" (NET).
 4. This has significance for both our identity and mission.
 - a) Gentile Christians are not God's new people who have "*replaced* the Jews." Rather, like wild olive shoots (Rom 11.17-24), we have been grafted on to the original tree and "in fact become part of Israel, . . . *the expansion of Israel* to include . . . people from all nations now united by faith in the Messiah Jesus" (Wright, 174).
 - b) It is therefore up to us to continue the mission "to the nations" (cf. Rom 15.23-27).
 - c) That is how we will be "the salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Matt 5.13-16).
- B. One of the most important things we can do in this regard is demonstrate how God can unite even the most bitter enemies; this is Paul's point in Ephesians 2-3, and the issue he addresses in Romans 14-15.

Conclusion

1. Searching for family roots has become a big deal in recent years, as the ad campaigns and success of web sites like ancestry.com illustrate.
2. We long to feel we are part of something bigger than ourselves, something that goes beyond the brief spans of our natural lives.
3. No vision is greater than the one God has for his people. We are part of his grand story with a charge to continue it. How thrilling!

David Anguish
www.davidanguish.com

⁸ Compare Acts 13.46 with 3.26, where Peter told his hearers that God had "sent [his servant] to you *first* . . ."