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Jiri Moskala

Andrews University, moskala@andrews.edu

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The Mission of God's People in the Old Testament

Jiří Moskala

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

When God calls His people into existence, He gives them a mission. There were no Old Testament people of God without a mission; there is no election without a commission. God's call presupposes a call for action. Biblical theology is a mission-oriented theology.¹ The Hebrew Scripture knows nothing about an election for salvation but knows an election for mission (Exod 3:7–10; 7:1–2; 19:5–6; Jer 1:5)! The mission and the message of the Old Testament people,² even though both issues

¹ For mission theology based on biblical material, consult Daniel I. Block, *The Gods of the Nations: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology*, foreword by Alan R. Millard, ed. David W. Baker, 2nd ed., Evangelical Theological Society Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Jon L. Dybdahl, "Doing Theology in Mission: Part I," *Ministry* (November 2005): 19–22; idem, "Doing Theology in Mission: Part II," *Ministry* (January 2006): 19–23; Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission: The Glory of Christ in All Time and Space, The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003); and Russell L. Staples, *Community of Faith: The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Contemporary World* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1999); Gerald Anderson, *Theology of the Christian Mission* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961); David Filbeck, *Yes, God of the Gentiles Too: The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, 1994); Roger E. Hedlund, *The Mission of the Church in the World: A Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); Richard D. Ridder, *Disciplining the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975).

² The doctrine of the church is a hot potato, and an interpretation of the biblical teaching related to this matter is strong dynamite. The first reformation (mainly John Wycliff and Jan Hus in the 14th and 15th centuries A.D.) started with a sharp revision of ecclesiology. It put the Christian church into turmoil, stirred enormous controversy, and

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can be separated, belong firmly together. The mission includes the proclamation of the message.³

However, some scholars object and argue that in the Old Testament there is no specific call to evangelize the world. Schnabel, for example, challenges Old Testament scholars, theologians, and missiologists by the claim that there is no commission in the Old Testament (in contrast to the New Testament) to go and “evangelize” the world. Abraham, Israel, and others are only passive witnesses for God, “a light to the world,” but not actually engaged in mission per se. He argues that there was nothing like an active programmatic plan to proclaim God’s message to the whole world during the times of Israel’s monarchy or intertestamental Judaism; thus they did not engage in mission.⁴

In response to this claim, one must first acknowledge that the modern reader of the Hebrew Scripture might have different questions and expectations than one can readily find answered in the biblical text because the basic characteristic of the Old Testament is that of a storybook

led to thousands of people being severely persecuted and even put to death. To demonstrate this ecclesiological sensitivity, it is sufficient to mention the case of John Hus, who was the first, to my knowledge, to write a publication about the church and published it in Latin in order for it to be widely read among educated people (see Mistr Jan Hus, *O církvi* [Praha: Nakladatelství Československé Akademie Věd, 1965]. Hus finished his treatise *De Ecclesia* [On the Church] in 1413. He proclaimed his disobedience to Rome, accepted only Jesus Christ as the head of the church, and wanted the world to know why. The material he presented was very explosive, and he was burned at the stake in Constance, Germany, on July 6, 1415. Thus, the first person who wrote about the Church was not Johann of Rafusa in 1433/34, as mistakenly stated by Veli-Matti Kaerkkainen in his *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002], 11).

³ About the summary and characteristics of the Old Testament message, see my article “The Message of God’s People in the Old Testament,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 19/1–2 (2008): 1–22.

⁴ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004). See also Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (Naperville: Allenson, 1965), 20: “There is an absence of a divine commission for the purpose and of any conscious outgoing to the Gentiles to win them for belief in Yahweh.” Blauw states: “When one turns to the Old Testament to find a justification and basis for missions in the current meaning, that is, as ‘foreign mission,’ one is bound to be disappointed” (Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 42). Bosch claims that “there is, in the Old Testament, no indication of the believers of the old covenant being sent by God to cross geographical, religious, and social frontiers in order to win others to faith in Yahweh” (David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology and Mission* [Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991], 17).

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with a metanarrative on salvation and not a handbook on mission with its philosophy, neither a blueprint for a programmatic missiological behavior. Also, the biblical language and imagery employed in regard to the mission are different from what we use today. One should not be surprised to find a lack of direct commands to mission, but instead stories in which are expressed hints and observations as well as some explicit statements that uncover the mission of God's people in Hebrew Scripture. These accidental expressions witness about the mission strategy in a different form and not as straightforward as one would wish.

In addition, the metanarrative of the Old Testament only progressively unfolds God's universal plan for the whole world. It helps to realize that God had a global plan, a blueprint for the people of God to actually fulfill, but it was not always plainly perceived. Christopher Wright fittingly states that "the mission of God is to bless all nations on earth. . . . Israel in the Old Testament was not chosen *over against* the rest of the nations, but *for the sake of* the rest of the nations."⁵ God's plan (*missio Dei*)⁶ for humanity can be expressed by the statement found in Isaiah: "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other" (Isa 45:22).⁷ Bosch wittily states: "If there is a missionary in the Old Testament, it is God Himself who will, as his eschatological deed *par excellence*, bring the nations to Jerusalem to worship him there together with his covenant."⁸ If this is so, then one can deduce that God will not do it Himself, but His working method will utilize humans to accomplish His objective (Gen 12:1–3; Exod 19:4–6). McIntosh defines God's mission as doing everything possible to communicate salvation to the world.⁹ Thus, God's universal purpose is actually the "basis for the missionary message of the Old Testament."¹⁰ God has a mission, and the believers in Him are to participate in it.¹¹

⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 99–100.

⁶ The Latin expression *missio Dei* means literally "the sending of God."

⁷ Biblical quotations are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.

⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 19.

⁹ John A. McIntosh, "Missio Dei," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 631–632.

¹⁰ Blauw, 17.

¹¹ Moltmann excellently underlines the point while writing about the mission of the church: "It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill to the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way" (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* [New York: Harper and Row, 1977], 64).

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1. *Twofold Mission.* The mission of the Old Testament people was twofold:¹² (1) for Israel's children and the following generations—an inward focus (centripetal). Parents had to repeat the stories of deliverance to their children (Exod 12:24–27; Deut 6:4–9; Isa 38:19): “One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works” (Ps 145:4–5)! The account of God's goodness had to be passed on from each generation to the next. “Tell your children and grandchildren” (Exod 10:2) is God's crucial instruction. And (2) for the other nations, the Gentile world (even to the islands; Isa 66:19)—an outward focus (centrifugal). The mission of the people of the Old Testament was directed toward others who did not belong to the community of faith. There is a growing number of scholars who take the Old Testament as a basis of biblical mission.¹³ Henry, for example, speaks about Moses as “the first missionary of whom we have any knowledge.”¹⁴ Bosch mentions that “stories of pagans like Ruth and Naaman who accepted the faith of Israel” indicate the missionary nature of the Old Testament.¹⁵ Others recognize individuals such as Abraham, Melchizedek, Jethro, Balaam, and Jonah as agents of God's mission.¹⁶ Prophets of God were not only speaking to their own people, but they prophesied about many nations as well; God will judge all (see especially

¹² Kaiser, *Mission*, 9.

¹³ Robert Martin-Achard, “Israel's Mission to the Nations,” *International Review of Missions* 51/4 (Oct 1962): 482–484; Johan H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960); Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); Francis M. Debose, *God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Mission* (Nashville: Broadman, 1983); Ferris L. McDaniel, “Mission in the Old Testament,” in *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*, ed. William J. Larkin, Jr., and Joel F. Williams (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 12–13; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Israel's Missionary Call,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 3rd ed. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000), 11. Kaiser uses three basic texts—Gen 12:1–3; Exod 19:4–6; and Ps 67—to make it clear that God sent Israel with the mission to the Gentiles.

¹⁴ Harold Henry, *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (London: Kingsgate, 1944), 15.

¹⁵ David J. Bosch, “Reflection on Biblical Models of Mission,” in *Towards the 21st Century in Christian Mission*, ed. James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 175–176.

¹⁶ Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*; Bryant Hicks, “Old Testament Foundations for Mission,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of the World Mission*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 53–62; Verkuyl, 96.

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Isa 2:4; 13–23; Jer 46–51; Ezek 25–32; Amos 1–2; Joel 3:12; Jonah; Obadiah; Mic 4:3). God was concerned with all nations, and the message of the Old Testament people transcended Israel’s borders. God did not provide warnings to people without a purpose, He always wanted to steer them to repentance (see Gen 6:3; Jonah 3).¹⁷

2. *Universal Mission.* One can speak about the mission of the people of the Old Testament only after the appearance of sin when two different ways of life were chosen (see two lines of genealogies—Cain and Seth—in Gen 4 and 5). The followers of God were to carry the message of salvation to others (Isa 66:19; Pss 67:2; 96:3). This mission was universal in scope and was gradually disclosed. Unfortunately, God’s people did not always succeed in their mission. Because of his fall into sin, Adam, the head of humankind, failed in his mission to lead all his family to God.¹⁸ Glasser aptly states: “God called Adam and Eve to accept responsibility for this world as his viceregents, to serve and control it under his direction and for his glory.”¹⁹ The power of evil was such a destructive force: it broke down good while letting evil triumph and degrade people to such an extent that God had to intervene with the Flood (Gen 6:5–6, 11–13).²⁰

The first hint about intentional mission activities in the Bible can be detected in Gen 4:26b when Seth “began to proclaim/preach the name of the Lord.” This possible translation can be found in Martin Luther’s and Robert Young’s versions. It seems that this mission was first family oriented and gradually enlarged as humanity grew.²¹ The posterity of Seth’s

¹⁷ God did not send, for example, Jonah to Nineveh in order that the Ninevites would later die as informed sinners. The message had power to create a right response in them.

¹⁸ Allusion to this function can be seen in Gen 1:28. This implicit role for Adam and Eve derives also from the fact that they were directly created by God Himself and created first. It follows that they should keep the creation order and lead humanity in respect, admiration, and obedience to God in order to maintain a right relationship with Him.

¹⁹ Arthur F. Glasser, “Biblical Theology of Mission,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 127.

²⁰ The biblical Flood account is about God’s grace, as He wants to save and gives many chances to people to repent (Gen 6:3,8; 8:1). If God had not intervened at that time, the avalanche of evil would have destroyed all that was good and valuable (only eight people were willing at that point in history to cooperate with God). There would have been no possibility of the Promised Seed (Gen 3:15) being born into a God-fearing family, and our enemy would not have been defeated. Consequently, God’s word would have failed, and humans would have lost all hope of salvation.

²¹ For details, see my article “The Concept and Notion of the Church in the Pentateuch” in *“For You Have Strengthened Me”: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Gerhard Pfandl in Celebration of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Martin Proebstle, Ger-

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descendants continued the proclamation, as is suggested by the phrase that “Enoch walked with God” (Gen 5:24; compare with Gen 6:9; Mic 6:8).²² But as they mixed with the descendants of Cain’s line, they failed, and faithful people almost disappeared (see Gen 6:1–8).²³

Genesis 1–11 is universal in scope.²⁴ Before the Flood, when the iniquity was rapidly growing, the Spirit of God was striving with people to call them to repentance, but unfortunately in vain (Gen 6:3,5). In addition, God called Noah to be His messenger, to be a preacher of righteousness to the antediluvian world (2 Pet 2:5), and to call all people to make the right decision for God and enter the ark. The biblical flood was worldwide;²⁵ therefore, his mission had to be worldwide, too. He was like a savior for his generation, but the Tower of Babel soon finished the good beginning after the Flood (Gen 11:1–9). God, for the third time, had to start from scratch, but this time with Abraham (Gen 12:1; 15:7).

The universality of the mission was explicitly mentioned for the first time in regard to Abraham. The Great Commission of the Old Testament declares: “And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen 12:3).²⁶ The Lord stresses it three times to Abraham (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). He is to be a blessing to “all families on earth,” i.e., a light to the whole world. God’s seven-fold blessing contained the key imperative phrase (in the center position): “I will bless you. . . . Be a blessing! . . .

ald A. Klingbeil, and Martin G. Klingbeil (St. Peter am Hart, Austria: Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, 2007), 13–14.

²² The expression “walked with God” replaces the word “lived” in similar descriptions for other individuals, thus pointing to the quality of the relationship between Enoch and God—he did not merely “live.” This phrase may hint to Enoch’s witnessing activities (see Jude 1:14–16).

²³ Sven Fockner, “Reopening the Discussion: Another Contextual Look at the Sons of God,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32 (2008): 435–456.

²⁴ Claus Westermann, *Beginning and End in the Bible*, Biblical Series, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 21.

²⁵ Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood,” in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John Templeton Baldwin (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 79–92; idem, “The Flood,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 261–263; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1987), 155–166.

²⁶ The New King James Version renders this text in the following way: “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3). The proper translation depends on the understanding of the Hebrew preposition “b” (“in,” “by,” “through,” “on,” etc.) and its syntactical function (taken here as an instrumental *bet*).

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and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen 12:2–3).²⁷ Note the imperative in the divine statement, which is usually overlooked! God commands Abraham to be a blessing to others because He blessed him. The Lord’s blessing cannot and should not be taken selfishly. Abraham needed to live for others.²⁸ Gen 12:2–3 was therefore God’s programmatic statement for Abraham and those who would follow the same faith. Walter Kaiser accurately articulates that this text provides “the formative theology” for “a divine program to glorify himself by bringing salvation to all on planet earth.”²⁹ Abraham thus became the special messenger, missionary, to the entire world,³⁰ with a mission which would only later be carried by Israel and fully fulfilled by *Ebed Yahweh* (Isa 42:1–9; 49:1–7; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12; 61:1–3) on an even larger scale because He would be the Salvation (not only that he would declare, bring, or proclaim it) for the whole world (Isa 49:6)!³¹

In many places where Abraham traveled and lived, he built altars and called on the name of the Lord (Gen 12:7,8; 13:4,18; 22:9–13). In this way, he witnessed about his unique God. However, Abraham’s first “missionary” journey to Egypt failed because of his disbelief, and he had to be escorted out (Gen 12:10–20). Later he fulfilled his prophetic role in

²⁷ My translation. God’s promise that He would through Abraham bless “all the families of the earth” (*kol mishpechot ha’aretz*) is repeated in various forms in Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4 and 28:14. The Hebrew phrase *kol mishpechot* is rendered in the Septuagint as *passai hai phulai* “all the tribes” (12:3; 28:14), but the Hebrew expression *kol goyeh* is used in Gen 18:18; 22:18; and 26:4 and is translated in the LXX as *panta ta ethne* (“all the nations”). The intention of the text envisioned the whole world with all families or clans (as this word is used in the case of Achan’s tribe/family, see Josh 7:14).

²⁸ Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven’t Heard* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 124: “God’s ultimate promise to Abraham, a challenge also, lies in the bringing of blessings to others.” Sarna comments on the statement “you shall be a blessing” in the following way: “As a consequence, you [Abram] will serve as the standard by which a blessing is invoked” (Nahum Sarna, *Genesis* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 89).

²⁹ Kaiser, *The Messiah*, 13.

³⁰ It is significant that the seventh promise is quoted in Acts 3:25 with reference to the Jewish people who listened to Peter’s sermon, but in Gal 3:8 it is used in reference to the Gentiles. In this way Abraham’s physical and spiritual descendants are included. The mission of the Christian church is the same: to be a blessing to the whole world (Matt 5:16; John 15:5,16; Eph 2:10; 1 Pet 2:9).

³¹ The literal translation of Isa 49:6 highlights this point plainly: “And he says: ‘It is a small thing that you be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will even give you for a light to the Gentiles (nations) that you will be my salvation to the end of the world’” (translation is mine).

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regard to the king of Sodom (Gen 14:17–24). He grew through his defeats (described in Gen 16 and 20), struggles, and victories (see Gen 18:16–33; 22:1–19) in such a way that at the end God stated that “Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees, and my laws” (Gen 26:5). The knowledge about the God of Abraham was to grow in the world in such a way that even “the nobles of the nations [will] assemble as the people of the God of Abraham” (Ps 47:9). Abraham’s God would meet them, and they were to follow Him. “All nations on earth will be blessed through him” (Gen 18:18) because God’s ultimate wish is always to bless all humanity.³² Abraham is a model of God’s mission.

Genesis 10, a previous chapter containing a table of seventy nations (a symbolic number standing for the totality of nations),³³ introduces the narrative about Abraham, which means that Abraham was to be a blessing to the whole world. However, Abraham also needed to be a teacher to his children. He was to teach them about the true God, instruct them about God’s ways, and direct them to keep His law in order that they might live according to “the way of the Lord” and do everything according to the will of God (Gen 18:19).³⁴

Abraham’s universal mission was repeated to Isaac (“And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed,” Gen 26:4), and reaffirmed to Jacob (Gen 28:13–15; 35:11–12; 46:3) and Moses (Exod 3:6–8; 6:2–8). Moses together with Israel needed to continue this universal mission to the whole world, starting as being light to the Egyptians, spreading out by the Exodus (Josh 2:8–12), and continuing on throughout the many centuries (Isa 42:6–7). The purpose of the ten plagues in Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea was not only to show that the

³² Christopher J. H. Wright, “Old Testament Theology of Mission,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 707.

³³ The number seventy in Gen 10 comprise the following: the Japhethites—fourteen nations; the Hamites—thirty nations; and the Semites—twenty-six nations. On the symbolism of numbers, see John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968).

³⁴ Abraham was to direct his family to keep “the way of the Lord,” which can imply that they would be taught by Abraham not only to do “what was right and just,” but also to live for others, as God’s concern was to bless the whole world. Thus, the “way of the Lord” becomes a missionary paradigm for God’s followers to be a blessing to all people.

It is significant to stress that the Old Testament Church was built first of all around the family circle: God’s directions for life are very important for all, and in this way a family is to be a light to the world, not only to an individual.

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Egyptians' gods were nothing (Exod 12:12), but also to help "the Egyptians to know" that God was the Lord (Exod 7:5,17; 8:22; 14:4,18).

God called Israel to an ethical distinctiveness (Lev 11:44–45; 18:3; 18–19; Deut 14:1–3; Mic 6:6–8). They were to be committed to a holy life, because only in this way could they live to the glory of God and His name, attract people to Him, be a light to the nations, and the nations could see their wisdom (Deut 4:6; Isa 58:8; 60:1–3; 62:1–2; Ezek 36:23). Moses's exhortatory speech to Israel, when he stressed the importance of obedience to God and His law (Deut 4:5–8), implies the visibility and some kind of missionary activities of Israel.

The mission of the Old Testament people can be summarized by God's ideal for Israel:

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests [thus, a mediatorial role of Israel for other nations is anticipated; they should be the means of bringing people to God] and a holy nation. (Exod 19:5–6)

See also Isa 42:6: "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles." God's purpose was to bless all nations through Israel.³⁵

3. Specific Examples of Missionary Activities. The question remains: Was Israel's witnessing passive or active? Did they actually go to foreign countries to speak about their living, loving, and holy God? As we mentioned above, opinions differ. There are only a few examples of active witnessing. One may consider the following cases of how God called specific individuals or people and sent them to accomplish particular tasks. For example, (1) Joseph was brought to Egypt by jealousy and the intrigues of his brothers, but God changed it in such a way that he became a savior for Egypt and his family and a witness for a true God (Gen 45:5–8; 50:19–21). (2) God called Moses and sent him to Egypt to encounter Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods (Exod 12:12). It is explicitly stated that God sent him there, which means that Moses was commissioned by God to present to Egypt a living Lord (Exod 3:10–15; Deut 34:11; 1 Sam 12:8; Ps 105:26). (3) For Naaman, the commander of the

³⁵ C. Gordon Olson, *What in the World Is God Doing?: The Essentials of Global Missions* (Cedar Knolls: Global Gospel, 1989), 17.

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army of the king of Aram, it was through the initiative and witness of a young slave Israelite girl who was in captivity in Syria that he became acquainted with the true God of heaven (2 Kgs 5:15). (4) The prophet Elisha went to Damascus, and when he was there, Ben-Hadad king of Aram sent his messenger to him to inquire if he would recover from his illness (2 Kgs 8:7–15). (5) The most obvious missionary activity is recorded in the book of Jonah. This prophet was not willing to go and fulfill God's commission. At the end, he wondered what was wrong with God when He saved the cruel Ninevites. Jonah saw the salvation of Ninevites as evil, and he refused to agree with this unprecedented compassion of God (John 3:10; 4:1).³⁶ In a dramatic way, God taught His follower about the universality of God's salvation (Jonah 4:6–11). The Lord demonstrated His unselfish love for all, even for the enemies of His people. (6) Prophet Isaiah, at the conclusion of his book, declares that God will send missionaries to the whole world. The Lord "will send survivors [of the people of Israel] to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Rosh, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations" (Isa 66:19). The result will be that "'from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh [it means, all nations] come to worship before me,' saith the LORD" (Isa 66:23). (7) Prophets Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel dedicate large portions of their books (even Obadiah's whole book) to pronounce judgments against other nations, which suggests that God was purposely working for these nations. They were responsible for their behavior and accountable to the Lord. (8) Jeremiah sent Seraiah to Babylon with a scroll, which first had to be read aloud, and then a symbolic act of sinking the scroll had to be performed (Jer 51:59–64). Seraiah's case offers a unique example of a prophetic message that could be heard in a foreign land and provides the evidence that the oracles against foreign nations could be actually delivered in the foreign countries.³⁷

³⁶ Jonah 4:1 reads literally: "It was evil to Jonah, a great evil, and he became angry." This great evil is described in a previous verse (Jonah 3:10) as God's compassion on the Ninevites! Salvation seemed evil to Jonah.

³⁷ God gave the message to Jeremiah to be proclaimed in Egypt, in some of her important cities, concerning the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, to attack Egypt, and about God's judging hand against her gods (Jer 46:13–14, 25–26). We do not exactly know how the message was delivered to Egypt, but there were Jewish settlements in Egypt at that time (see Jer 43:5–7; 44:1; compare with 2 Kgs 23:34) and some communication was going on between Israel and Egypt. Notice how another message of Jeremiah's was rejected by a large assembly of Jews living in Egypt (see Jer 44:15–18).

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(9) Daniel and his three friends witnessed to Babylon's top officials and the king about the true God (see Daniel, chaps. 1–3). They helped Nebuchadnezzar to know the Most High God. After his conversion, described in Daniel, chap. 4, he wrote a letter to all nations about the mighty Most High God who had humbled him and the King of heaven who would reign forever (Dan 4:1–3, 37). Daniel also witnessed to the last Babylonian king, Belshazzar (see Dan 5), to Darius the Mede and the high Medo–Persian officials (see Dan 6), and possibly even to Cyrus (Dan 1:21; 6:28; 10:1), who issued the decree to allow the Jews to return home from Babylonian captivity (2 Chr 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4). Glover rightly describes Daniel as a missionary.³⁸ (10) Witnessing to Gentiles is presented in the Psalms, the missionary book par excellence: “I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples” (Ps 57:9); “Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples” (Ps 117:1–2).

It is also true that the geographical location of Israel (placed at the main crossroads of Middle East international routes, between Egypt and Assyria or Babylon) was a very significant factor in the Israelites' being witnesses for their God and an object lesson for the nations.³⁹ Different cultures, merchants, religions, nations, and people were meeting there, and people were confronted with a different system of beliefs.

The importance of the world-wide mission of Israel is underlined in the fact that the temple in Jerusalem would be the mega-world center for

³⁸ Robert H. Glover, *The Bible Basis of Mission* (Los Angeles: Bible of Los Angeles, 1946), 21: “Daniel was another great foreign missionary [together with Jonah] whose divinely given commission, . . . took him before kings and rulers. He witnessed for God in the courts of four successive heathen monarchs, and so effectively as to lead them to recognize and proclaim his God to be the most high God, whose kingdom was universal and everlasting.” See also John N. Oswalt, “The Mission of Israel to the Nations,” in *Through No Fault of Their Own?: The Fate of Those Who Never Heard*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 93–94. Sung Ik Kim concludes his study, “Proclamation in Cross-Cultural Context: Missiological Implications of the Book of Daniel” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2005): “Daniel and his friends were aware of God's sovereignty in human history and of 'God's salvific purpose for all people.' Furthermore, the book of Daniel demonstrates some strategies used in *missio Dei*, such as God's use of committed individuals, dreams and visions, prayer and spiritual formation, power encounter, and spiritual conflict” (285).

³⁹ The importance of biblical geography and the geographical position of Israel is stressed by William S. LaSor, “Biblical Geography,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:445–446; C. C. McCown, “Geography of Palestine” in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 3:626–639.

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a true worship (Isa 2:2) and that everyone would come there and learn how to worship the true God (Isa 2:3–4; 56:2–8; 62:9–11; Jer 3:17; 33:9; Mic 4:1–2). The Israelites would become teachers of righteousness: “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, “Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you”’” (Zech 8:23).⁴⁰ During the time of the Exile, Daniel pronounced a blessing on those who would lead others to righteousness (Dan 12:3). It is noteworthy to stress that his message has an international connotation and perspective (Dan 2:31–47; 7:1–14). It is God who “changes times and seasons; sets up kings and deposes them” (Dan 2:21). Blauw points out that Dan 7 presents God’s purpose for the whole world.⁴¹

4. *Additional Biblical Support.* The righteous acts of God during the Exodus were heard by many other nations (see, for example, Josh 2:8–11). Hiram, the King of Tyre, spoke very highly about the Lord, God of Solomon: “Because the Lord loves his people, he has made you their king. . . . Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth!” (2 Chr 2:11–12). The queen of Sheba visited Solomon because Solomon’s fame had reached her far country (1 Kgs 10:1–9; 2 Chr 9:1–8). These narratives suggest that other nations also heard about the God of Israel and Solomon’s wisdom. Paradoxically, sometimes God’s people needed to go through troubles or even be sent into exile so that they might accomplish their primary mission—to be a light to the world.⁴²

Two missionary Psalms (Pss 67 and 96) express very eloquently a universal mission and focus on God’s promise to Abraham that he and his posterity would be a blessing to all the families of the earth. Ps 67 is

⁴⁰ In this context it is significant to observe that Isaiah speaks about “Galilee of the nations/Gentiles” (Isa 9:1) because Galilee will become a part of their territory where they will worship the true living God of Israel.

⁴¹ Blauw, 65. On “universalism” in the Old Testament, which has the whole world in focus, see *ibid.*, 15–54. The universality of God’s mission lies in the ultimate goal to establish God’s universal kingdom on earth (Dan 2:44; 7:26–27).

⁴² See the examples of Joseph as a vizier in Egypt (Gen 39:2–6, 20–21; 41:37–41); Moses as a leader of Israel in confrontation with the Egyptian pharaoh (Exod 5–15); an anonymous slave Israelite girl who witnessed to Naaman (2 Kgs 5:1–19); Daniel as a prime minister and president of the scientific academy in Babylon (Dan 1:20–21; 5–6); Daniel’s three friends in the fiery furnace (Dan 3); people of God as “singers” of religious songs on the demand of Babylonians (Ps 137:1–3); Esther as a queen in Medo-Persia (Esther 4:12–16); and Nehemiah as a leader in the midst of great tensions in the Persian court (Neh 2:1–10).

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built on the Aaronic benediction from Num 6:24–26 in which the name of the Lord, *Yahweh* (which expresses the idea of a personal God of His covenant people), is changed for God (*elohim*) to stress the universal call of God to all nations to praise Him: “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him” (Ps 67:1–7).

In Ps 96:2–9, the psalmist calls believers to proclaim (v. 3 is the only place where the imperative intensive form of the verb to “declare” is used in the book of Psalms) God’s salvation among the nations:

Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

There are also other texts in Psalms that call for missionary activities among the nations: “Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts” (Ps 105:1–2). “I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame” (Ps 119:46). “Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’ The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy” (Ps 126:2–3). “They [the Lord’s saints, according to v. 10] will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom” (Ps 145:11–12). “My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever” (Ps 145:21). The psalmists thus declare that they will praise God among the nations (Pss 57:9;

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108:3), and the kingdoms of the earth should “sing to God” (Ps 68:32). Thus, the whole earth will “be filled with his glory” (Ps 72:19).

As a result of these witnessing exercises, Egyptians and Ethiopians will submit to the Lord (Ps 68:31), “all kings will bow down” and “all nations will serve” the Davidic King, the Messiah (Ps 72:11), God will be “feared by the kings of the earth” (Ps 76:12), God will judge all the nations as His inheritance (Ps 82:8), “all the nations . . . will come and worship” before the Lord (Ps 86:9), foreigners then will be like the natives enjoying the benefits of citizenship (Ps 87:4–6), and “all men” will know of God’s “mighty acts” (Ps 145:12).

The Prophet Isaiah explained that the descendants of Israel would be a spectacle to all nations of God’s goodness to them:

Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed. I delight greatly in the Lord, . . . He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, . . . For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. (Isa 61:9–11)

God foretells the bright future of Zion and Jerusalem in these terms: “The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow” (Isa 62:2). Isaiah speaks about missionaries who “will proclaim my [the Lord’s] glory among the nations” (Isa 66:19). Isaiah continues by stressing what the Lord will do: “I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites.”⁴³ The book of Isaiah ends with the international and worldwide dimension of worship: “‘From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,’ says the Lord” (Isa 66:23).⁴⁴ In this context it is interesting to notice Isaiah’s rebuke to King Hezekiah for not fulfilling his God-given mission by not sharing God’s salvation message with the Babylonian

⁴³ Walter Brueggemann appropriately explains: “Yahweh will dispatch ‘survivors,’ that is, restored Jews, to all parts of the known world. These messengers (missionaries?) will go where the news of Yahweh has never been before. . . . From among these *goyim*, these Gentiles nations, some will be designated and ordained as priests and Levites, priests to handle Jewish holy things and Levites to interpret Jewish torah” (*Isaiah 40–66* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998], 258–259).

⁴⁴ See also Mic 4:1–5; Zech 2:11; 8:20–23; 13:8–9; 14:16–19.

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emissaries but instead showing his royal treasures (2 Kgs 20:12–19; 2 Chr 32:31; Isa 39:1–8).

Prophet Zephaniah strikingly notes that “the nations on every shore will worship him [the Lord],” not in Jerusalem but “every one in its own land” (Zeph 2:11), and remarkably states that God will “purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him shoulder to shoulder” (Zeph 3:9). God projected that even from beyond Cush (Ethiopia) will come His worshipers who are called His people to serve Him: “From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, my scattered people, will bring me offerings” (Zeph 3:10). The NIV Study Bible comments: “Israel’s God will be acknowledged by the nations, and God’s people will be honored by them (cf. vv. 19–20).”⁴⁵ Greg King underlines that God’s true worshipers “will be the recipients of international fame and honor”⁴⁶ and that “peoples from the most distant places . . . will experience salvation and will worship Yahweh on His day. He is the redemptive King not only of the Judahites, but also of people from many nations.”⁴⁷ Thus, “on two occasions (2:11; 3:9–10) Zephaniah depicted worship of Yahweh taking place on a worldwide basis by those who are delivered from the judgment. . . . There will be so many that they will stand shoulder to shoulder, serving Yahweh unitedly (3:9).”⁴⁸ Because of that, God is depicted in a unique activity (never again mentioned in the entire Old Testament): He is singing over His people with joy: “The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing” (Zeph 3:17).

The prophetic word of God was to be promulgated to others, but this word needed to be accompanied by godly behavior. In this way, the God of Israel would be attractive to all nations, and they would come and worship Him (Isa 56:6–7; 61:9–11; 62:2).⁴⁹ As a result of such activities, kings would issue edicts in favor of Jerusalem’s temple (Cyrus, Darius

⁴⁵ *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 1398.

⁴⁶ Greg A. King, “The Remnant in Zephaniah,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (October–December 1994): 424.

⁴⁷ Greg A. King, “The Day of the Lord in Zephaniah,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (January–March 1995): 21.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁹ Amos mentions that nations (note the plural form) will bear the Lord’s name (Amos 9:12)! This text is quoted in Acts 15:17 as the fulfillment of God’s promise of proclaiming the Gospel to the Gentiles and as the confirmation of His intention to save them (Acts 15:14–15).

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and Artaxerxes; see 2 Chr 36:22–23; Ezra 3–7; Dan 6:25–28; Neh 2:1–10). Otherwise, the people of God would be a byword and object of scorn (Joel 2:17; Ezek 36:20–21). God is either dead or alive in people's minds. Consequently, it depends to a great degree on the behavior of His followers; their deeds are a stronger witness and speak louder than words as to whether their God is alive in their lives or not (Ezek 20:41; 36:23; Hos 1:9; 2:21–23; compare with Matt 5:16). If God's remnant people truly accomplish His task, then people will come to the Lord and become His faithful followers. Isaiah and Micah prophetically envisioned a time when "many peoples/nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to . . . the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths'" (Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2). Zechariah underscored it very emphatically: "Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people" (Zech 2:11).

The people of God in the Old Testament were to be an object lesson for other people and nations. When nations saw what God had done for them, they should have recognized the God of Israel as a living God and followed Him because He was the true King. Thus, God was showing Himself holy through His people in the sight of many nations (Josh 2:9–14; Isa 61:9–11; Ezek 20:12; 36:23; 38:23; 39:7,27–29). This is a different type of evangelism than what Christians usually have in mind: not so much by going outside and preaching, but by being a living example of God's intervening grace. Witnessing without practical lifestyle support is empty, harmful, and destructive. It can never be overemphasized that the exemplary conduct of God's people was and is the best witness for the Lord. God declares: "I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Sovereign Lord, "when I show myself holy through you before their eyes" (Ezek 36:23; see also 36:33–38).

5. *God's Working with Gentiles (Outside of Israel)*. God called His people to a certain mission, and His people needed to fulfill that mission, but God also worked outside of Israel. The Old Testament remnant was not an elect elite group who would be uniquely saved, but they were elected for a mission! However, it does not mean that God did not also use other individuals or did not work for other people outside of the main community of faith. How it was done is not always revealed to us; it is simply stated. Examples of God's working with different people outside of Israel include:

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a. Melchizedek, king of Salem and the priest of the God Most High (Gen 14:18–20). Melchizedek appears suddenly on the scene as an unknown character, blesses Abraham, and expresses his strong belief in the Creator God who gave victory to Abraham over their enemies. Abraham, as an expression of his love and gratitude to God for all he received from God, gave his tithe to Melchizedek. Because Melchizedek faithfully served the Lord, he became a type for Christ (Heb 7:1–3; 7:11–17).

b. Jethro, the priest of Midian and Moses’s father-in-law (Exod 18:1). Jethro, after hearing from Moses what the Lord had done for Israel in Egypt, praises Yahweh: “Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly” (Exod 18:10–11).

c. Balaam, a prophet of God. Balaam pronounces messianic prophecies (Num 24:17–19) in the midst of his apostasy (Num 22–24), which cost him his life (Num 31:8; compare Rev 2:14).

d. Rahab, the prostitute in Jericho. Rahab heard about the God of Israel, believed, helped two Israelite spies, saved her family from destruction, and joined the people of God (Josh 2:1–21; 6:17, 25; compare with Matt 1:5; Heb 11:31; James 2:25). Rahab later married Salmon, son of Nahshon, one of the prominent princes of Judah (Num 7:12; Ruth 4:18–22; 1 Chr 2:11–12; Matt 1:1, 5–6), and became an ancestor of the Messiah.⁵⁰

e. God worked with other nations, e.g., the Cushites, Philistines, and Arameans. Prophet Amos boldly proclaims God’s intervention for these nations: “‘Are you not Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?’ declares the Lord. ‘Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?’” (Amos 9:7). There are no historical records about these activities of God, and there is no other biblical passage which witnesses about them except this text in Amos.

f. God gave the Canaanite people 400 years of grace to repent and return to Him (Gen 15:13–16). Similarly God, before the flood, offered 120 years of grace (Gen 6:3). However, in both cases rebellion against God prevailed.

g. The nations were judged by God. As already mentioned, many prophets uttered oracles against foreign nations (Isa 13–23; 28–33; Jer

⁵⁰ Richard M. Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1995), 52.

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46–51; Ezek 25–32; Joel 3:1–3,12; Amos 1–2). It suggests that God has revealed to them the truth and that they were accountable for their actions to God (see especially the books of Jonah and Obadiah; Jer 51:59–64).⁵¹

h. Nebuchadnezzar, the famous Babylonian king, wrote a letter to the pagan world about his dramatic conversion story and powerfully witnessed about God's eternal kingdom and the Most High God who humiliated him and revealed His sovereignty to him (Dan 4).

God ultimately puts together these two different groups (God's faithful remnant—people from the mainstream of His church, and people who work outside of this pattern). “Insiders” and “outsiders” belong together! For example, Melchizedek came in contact with Abraham (Gen 14:18–20); Rahab with Israel (Josh 2); Jethro with Moses (Exod 3 and 18); Naaman with Elisha (2 Kgs 5); Nebuchadnezzar with Daniel (Dan 1; 2; and 4); Ahasuerus [Xerxes] with Esther (Esth 1–9). Moabite Ruth expressed this so eloquently to Israelite Naomi: “Your people will be my people, and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16).

Isaiah describes this achievement with amazing words and provides a vivid picture: “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance’” (Isa 19:23–25). This is a stunning, surprising, and unique statement, because not only Israel, but also Egypt and Assyria are called the people of God, and they are to worship together!⁵²

⁵¹ Not only nations are judged, but also God's judgment is pronounced upon false gods, as in the case of the Babylonian god Marduk or Bel (see Isa 46–48). In addition, the event of the Exodus is powerfully described as God's victory over the Egyptian gods (Exod 12:12). As a result, their defeat could liberate people's minds from serving them.

⁵² It is very important to note that the prophet Isaiah mentions, in the midst of judgment over ten nations, three positive passages regarding the Gentiles (chaps. 13–23): 14:1–2 (aliens will join God's people and unite with them); 18:7 (nations will bring gifts to the temple); and 19:17–25 (altar and pillar to the Lord will be erected in Egypt; the Egyptians will cry to the Lord; He will make Himself known to them, and they will worship Him).

Conclusion

God is the Missionary with His breathtaking mega-plan (*missio Dei*) to bless and save the whole world. However, for that purpose, He uses human instruments, and through them He leads people to Himself (Isa 45:22). From the very beginning, the horizon of mission for the Old Testament people was to be worldwide. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, prophets, and others had their mission to fulfill. The ultimate, deliberate purpose of God in electing Abraham, or Israel, was to become a blessing, light, and witness to the entire world about the true God so that everyone could come to a saving knowledge of the living and loving Lord. The goal of God's plan was always to invite all human beings to salvation, because from the very beginning the plan of redemption was never concealed nor reserved only for one family, group, or nation. Through Abraham and his posterity, all the families of the earth were to be blessed. The Old Testament vision of mission was all-inclusive.

Mission is not so much about going somewhere, sending someone, or doing something. Mission is primarily about being—being a special people with a special message which needs to be modeled in real life. This has implications for Christian ecclesiology, and particularly for Adventist ecclesiology, which can be summarized in several points:⁵³

(1) Mission means identification with God's ultimate goal for saving humanity and working out this plan.

(2) Being is more important than sending. The call to ethical lifestyle and living tangibly the message of God was a crucial focus that is to be emphasized in our modern times.

(3) The worldwide scope of the mission of God's people did not change. As God had a deliberate plan to save the world during the time of the Old Testament dispensation, so He has it today.

(4) The mission and message are inseparable. The essentials of the message did not change. It has had new and different emphases during the passing of time, but basic principles of salvation were valid all the time. Paul, for example, built the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ on key texts derived from the Hebrew Scripture according to the structure of the Hebrew Canon: Gen 15:6 (Torah);

⁵³ Striking similarities with the Three Angels' Message of Rev 14:6–13 should not be overlooked: all major concepts are included there in core. Our Adventist message and mission should be thus a continuation of the message and mission of the Old Testament people.

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Hab 2:4 (Prophets), and Ps 32:1–2 (Writings). God's people of today ought to proclaim the "eternal Gospel."⁵⁴ This is against the Marcionite view, which underscored the discrepancy between Old and New Testaments and stressed the inferiority of the Old Covenant.⁵⁵

(5) The Old Testament community of faith and its message was eschatological and future oriented.⁵⁶ The biblical-eschatological paradigm should provide a pattern for our thinking today. God is coming to establish His eternal kingdom. This eschatological focus provides powerful fuel for mission.⁵⁷ The hope of the second coming of Jesus Christ is the hope of all hopes.

(6) Prophets constantly spoke against false religious systems and warned against the infiltration of paganism into true worship. So the task of God's people today is to present first of all the true picture about God, reveal His true character, who He is, and point the attention of all to Jesus Christ while also unmasking firmly, but lovingly and wisely, the Antichrist with its apostate religious system.

(7) God uses two different groups: (A) insiders, i.e., the faithful remnant (principal stream of the community of believers); and (B) outsiders, i.e., those who serve God faithfully according to their light but work outside of His eschatological movement. The faithful remnant has a special God-given mission, but besides the mainstream God has His messengers, individuals, or communities who also proclaim the truth. The Lord desires to put these two different streams together by drawing them closer

⁵⁴ According to Rev 14:6, the message proclaimed before the second coming of Christ is called "the eternal Gospel." This expression is a *hapax legomenon* in the entire Bible, and this purposeful fact stresses the continuity and unchangeability of the Gospel that prepares the world for the return of Christ. This message is not new, but was always preached, was and is always valid, is the same, and is final. It has had specific emphases, but nevertheless its basics and foundation are unchanged. There is only one Gospel according to God or the Bible. What is preached before the parousia is not and should not be a new invention, but a confirmation of the eternal Truth and eternal Covenant about the relationship between God and humans.

⁵⁵ About Marcion, his ideas and theology, see Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2006), 24–49.

⁵⁶ The same principles of worship observed in the practice of the Old Testament people needs to be followed in our religious experience today. The religious calendar of the Old Testament people was centered on salvific events. These liturgical anchors and theological emphases need to be implemented in our liturgical practices.

⁵⁷ Amedeo Molnár, "Eschatologická naděje české reformace" in *Od reformace k zítřku* (Praha: Kalich, 1956), 13–101; Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man* (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1978), 105–111.

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to each other because His ultimate goal is to have only one flock (Isa 14:1; 56:3–8; see also John 10:16). We need to recognize God’s work outside of our community of faith.⁵⁸

Jiří Moskala is Professor of Old Testament Exegesis and Theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Moskala received his Th.D. in 1990 from the Comenius Faculty of Protestant Theology, which is now renamed the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University, Czech Republic. His dissertation was entitled: “The Book of Daniel and the Maccabean Thesis: The Problem of Authorship, Unity, Structure, and Seventy Weeks in the Book of Daniel (A Contribution to the Discussion on Canonical Apocalypics)” and was published in the Czech language. In 1998 he completed his Ph.D. from Andrews University. His dissertation was entitled: “The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals of Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, and Rationale (An Intertextual Study)” and has been published under the same title. Moskala has authored several books and articles in the Czech and English languages. moskala@andrews.edu

⁵⁸ Compare with Rev 18:1–4: “Come out of her, my people!” This means that God has His children in spiritual Babylon, and He works for these faithful people in different denominations and churches. We need to genuinely love and work with Babylonians while denouncing Babylon as a fallen religious system!

It is striking that all crucial aspects (mentioned above) can also be found in the eternal Gospel as it is summarized in the form of the Three Angels’ Message of Rev 14:6–13. Thus, the remnant (Rev 12:17; 14:12; 19:10) is and should be a continuation of the mission of the Old Testament people. This end-time message needs to prepare people to meet the Lord. Note, for example, God’s program to preach the Gospel to the whole world: “He [the messenger] had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people” (v. 6). See the stress on an ethical life in making a decision in respect to God and living to God’s glory: “Fear God and give Him glory” (v. 7a). Observe the emphasis on worshipping the Creator, which implies the observance of God’s law (quotation from the fourth commandment of Exod 20:10): “Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (v. 7b). Notice that the eternal Gospel not only puts emphasis on living in the Lord: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on” (v. 13), but also warns against the Antichrist: “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries” (v. 8). Note the radical call to follow God’s instruction, for eternal death will meet the wicked: “If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath” (vv. 9–11). In addition, observe the accent on the perseverance of the saints in mission, their obedience to the Lord, and their keeping the faith of and in Jesus: “Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (v.12; NKJV).