

REACH|12 (Week 3 of 3)

A Global Gospel for the Glory of God

1 Chronicles 16:23-34

Mark Vroegop

²³ Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day. ²⁴ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! ²⁵ For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods. ²⁶ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. ²⁷ Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place. ²⁸ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! ²⁹ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; ³⁰ tremble before him, all the earth; yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. ³¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!" ³² Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! ³³ Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. ³⁴ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! (1 Chronicles 16:23–34 -ESV).

The most famous verse in the Bible is probably John 3:16. In fact, it is this verse that you will most often see at national sporting events as someone uses their 15 seconds of fame to hold up a sign with this well-known Bible passage. I've often found myself smiling at the creativity of people in getting this message across.

But what is it about "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..." that we love so much? At one level, the verse is a great distillation of the gospel. But at another level, I think it is a favorite because of its winsome beginning: "For God so loved the world..." John 3:16 is sweeping in its scope. So it is powerful and memorable not only because of the beauty of redemption but also because of the size of the vision: "For God so loved the WORLD..."

This is our last week of REACH|12, our annual spotlight on global missions. It has been a great three weeks of focusing on our missionaries, Vision Trips, and global partners. Our theme verse has been Psalm 2:8: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage," and today I'd like to carry that one step further by looking at the global nature of the gospel and glory of God. In fact, my aim today is to show you that if God's glory isn't just personal, then global isn't optional. Or to say it positively: **God's global glory demands a global heart.**

I want to show you this theme of God's global glory from the entire Bible. Yes, that is right: the entire Bible. Beginning in Genesis and ending in Revelation, I want to take you on a journey in which you will see a crescendo of passion for the nations which is rooted in a passion for God's glory.

I've divided our journey into six seasons of biblical history. Each of them builds on the others, and they grow in their clarity and power.

1. Father Abraham

While John 3:16 is likely the most familiar Bible passage, I would suggest that "Father Abraham Had Many Sons" is arguably the most annoying children's song. However, its message - "I am one of them and so are you, so let's just praise the Lord" - is spot on. Let me explain.

Abraham is called the father of the Jewish people because he was the one whom God called out of the land of Ur with this promise from Genesis 12:

"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

God's calling of Abraham (called Abram in Genesis 12) was not entirely about Abraham. God was going to do something through Abraham which would be personally remarkable, but the ultimate intention of God was beyond Abraham.

When God tested Abraham by asking him to offer his only son Isaac, God reaffirmed this promise, and He made it even more specific. Notice two things: 1) God swears by Himself, and 2) the promise of blessing will be fulfilled through Abraham's offspring:

¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice" Genesis 22:15-18 (ESV).

Therefore, God's global focus begins with a promise to Abraham about the way in which he will be blessed in order to be a blessing to the nations.

And so we see a model of the way that God is going to work throughout the Bible to accomplish His purposes and plans. God is going to do something in Abraham's life which will result in a blessing to others. Let me diagram this for you:



God is blessing Abraham so that through him, blessing will come to the nations.

2. The Nation of Israel

As we move through the time period of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), we see that the means of God's mission grows from a singular person (Abraham) to an entire nation. The book of Exodus is all about God's gathering of His people by delivering them out of the slavery of Egypt. In other words, God rescues His people not only because they are in slavery, but also because of what God wants to communicate about Himself **through** their deliverance.

Exodus 34 records the moment when God reaffirms His covenant with the people of Israel. This happens after the first giving of the 10 Commandments, after the incident with the Golden Calf, and as Moses delivers a second set of tablets. Look at God's mission:

¹⁰ And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you (Exodus 34:10).

We learn here that God has a goal for Israel far beyond just being their God. He certainly is that, but He aims to display something about himself to "all the people among who you are..."

Fast forward approximately 500 years, flying over the time of the Judges, we come to the glory years of Israel under the leadership of King David. One of the hallmarks of David's life was his passion for worship. He is the author of numerous Psalms, and he developed plans for the temple, a permanent place for worship. But early in his reign, David brought the Ark of the Covenant out of storage at the home of Obed-edom, the place where it has been left after the incident with Uzzah's death (see 1 Chronicles 13). David reestablished the importance of corporate worship by building a tabernacle and returning the Ark to its place of reverence and prominence. Can you imagine what a moment this must have been for the people of Israel as the Ark and worship returned? It was a monumental moment and it pictured the return of God's glory to the people of God.

To celebrate this historic moment, 1 Chronicles 16 records a song of praise which is collection of three other Psalms (105, 96, and 106). The Psalm is filled with high praise for how God has dealt with Israel. But there is also a clear sense of their mission to the nations. Look at the following verses:

⁸ Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!⁹ Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! (1 Chronicles 16:8–9).

²³ Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day.²⁴ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! (1 Chronicles 16:23–24).

³¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!" (1 Chronicles 16:31).

As you can see, the focal point of worship for Israel was not only their personal experience of God but also their role in being a light to the nations. The people of God were blessed by God in order to be a blessing to the nations.

This theme is repeated again when the temple is built by Solomon. In the prayer of dedication, Solomon prays very specifically for people outside of Israel:

32 "Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for the sake of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm, when he comes and prays toward this house, 33 hear from heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name (2 Chronicles 6:32–33).

The temple was to be a place of global outreach. The vision was that when people heard about the great work of God on behalf of the Israelites, they would come to worship the one, true God. In other words, Israel was to be a platform for a display of God's glory to the nations. You could think of it like this:



The purpose of Israel as a nation and the Temple was to be a place where the people of God worshipped with a view toward the entire world.

3. The Prophets

The third season involves what we commonly call the Prophets, and there is one verse that I'm sure many of you have in the back of your heads as we are talking about all of this. Isaiah 56:7: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." We see this theme of God's global glory highlighted in the prophets in a different way.

This season often included a vision for the distant future that was intended to be instructive in the immediate situation. In other words, the prophets talked about the future in order to help the people know how to think and live now. By knowing what the future would be like, they could better understand their present lives. Therefore, the prophets often spoke about a coming day of future glory that will be global.

¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

This vision involves an outreach to the nations. It is central to their message.

² *It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, ³ and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2–3).*

Further, the vehicle of this message will come from "the root of Jesse." From Abraham and from Israel and from the line of David will come a light-bearer to the nations.

¹⁰ *In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious (Isaiah 11:10).*

Therefore, you could think of God's activity developing into a further refinement that looks like this:



And then the book of Isaiah ends with a glorious vision of the End Times:

¹⁸ *"For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, ¹⁹ and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. ²⁰ And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. ²¹ And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD. ²² "For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. ²³ From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD (Isaiah 66:18–23).*

From Abraham, from Israel, and now from the Root of Jesse will come the global glorification of God through the gathering of the nations. God's plan for worship is not just about Israel; it is about the nations.

4. Jesus

The fourth season in biblical history involves the coming of the Messiah, the Root of Jesse, and the Son of God. Jesus is the blessing promised to Abraham. He is the means by which God rescues sinners and glorifies himself. He is the fulfillment of the promises in the prophets. He is the way that God loves the world and provides atonement.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

When Jesus was dedicated at the temple, an old man named Simeon said this about Him:

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel (Luke 2:30–32).

When Jesus cleansed the temple He famously said: "My house shall be a house of prayer for all the nations" (Mark 11:17), and when He talked about his crucifixion, He said, "... when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32).

While it is true that Jesus' ministry focal point was the Jewish people (Matt 15:24), that mission served a broader purpose. Jesus was to be rejected by His own people so that the message of the gospel could be broadcast on a global scale.

When Jesus talked with His disciples about the future, He had the nations on His mind and heart:

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14).

And when Jesus gave His Great Commission to His disciples after His resurrection, the nations are clearly a passion of His.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 28:19).

So God's purposes for reaching the world extend from Abraham, to Israel, through the Promised One, and fulfilled in Jesus to reach the world. The global mission of God is personal.



5. The Church

The fifth season is the church which is the guardian, carrier, and proclaimer of this beautiful and global message about Christ and Him crucified. It is the church who lives out the commission of Jesus. And this is where we share in this story. This is where the season becomes more than historical; it becomes personal. We are a part of this narrative. This charge has been given to us.

It began at Pentecost when the Spirit is poured out on people from all over the world. Acts 2:5 says that devout Jews from "every nation under heaven" were gathered in Jerusalem and heard the gospel preached to them in their own tongue. What's more, the gospel crossed the ethnic barrier of Jews/Gentile barrier as Peter witnessed numerous Gentiles coming to faith in Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit. Peter and the church wrestled with the fact that Gentiles no longer had

to become Jewish – “If then God gave them the same gift to them as he gave to use when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” (Acts 11:17). Salvation was now something given to “everyone who believes” (Acts 10:43).

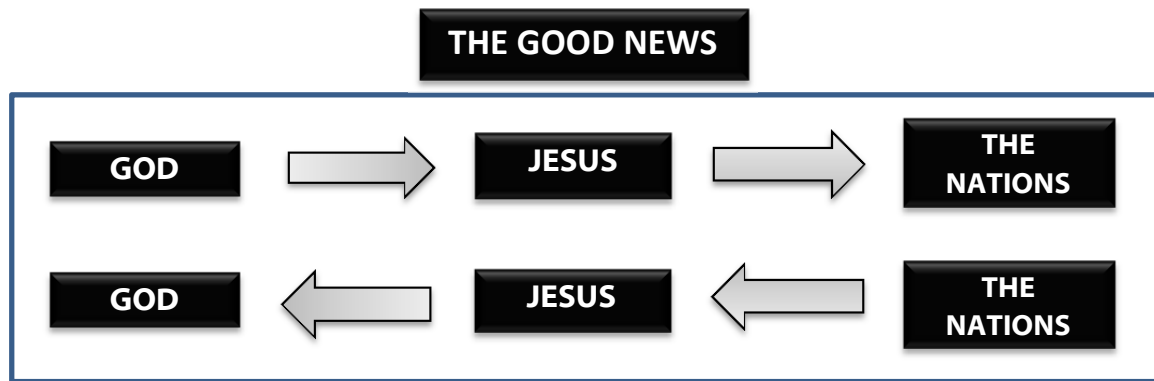
This launched the Apostle Paul’s ministry which he described in Romans 1:6 as “to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.” And Paul saw this global preaching of the gospel as a direct fulfillment of what God had promised to Abraham in Genesis 22.

⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” (Galatians 3:8).

Paul believed that the gospel needed to be preached throughout the world, and he did more to evangelize the known world than anyone else. This mission was his passion because he believed that a global vision was a central part of the gospel. Look how he summarizes it in 1 Timothy 3:

¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory (1 Timothy 3:16).

Therefore, our message is simply this:



The role of the church – our role – is to declare this message to every person on the planet – to tell every nation that “God so loved the world...”

6. The End

This mission to the nations reaches its ultimate crescendo in the book of Revelation as we hear about the consummation of God’s redemptive plan. We see the beautiful completion of God’s aim of the global glorification of His own name through every nation.

We hear about it in the Song of the Lamb:

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9–10).

We learn about a future multitude from every nation:

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:9–10).

And we see in the closing chapters of Revelation a beautiful picture of an eternal life where God's glory, the personal presence of Jesus, and the nations are all gathered together in perfect harmony and oneness.

22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. 1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (Revelation 21:22–22:5).

Do you see the beauty of this? Does your heart beat with joy for the global nature of God's glory? Do you see that while the gospel is deeply personal, it is not just personal? Do you understand that the global display of God's glory is central to the gospel and central to our worship? Do you see that God's heart for the world is not just limited to John 3:16; it is the very heart of the gospel?

If so, then you will pray? If so, then you will give? If so, then you will go? If so, then you will do anything to reach the nations? No one will need to guilt you into doing anything. You will be compelled because it is so clear, so compelling, and so beautiful.

Your heart will resonate with the Psalmist when he said, *"³¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!" (1 Chron. 16:31).*

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