

Series: The Missing Half	Reference: <i>Various Scriptures</i>	Title: Internationals	Date: 4.18.2021
Website Writeup: Sometimes Christians are sent out to other 'nations'. Sometimes God brings them to us! Let's become aware of all the opportunity God has provided right among us to reach the nations.			

(This material is largely derived from UnveilinGLORY's YouTeach series.)

We've done four weeks on the story of the Bible. Now we're into the second week of our four-part series, 'The Missing Half'. If you need to review, please watch past sermons online. Today we focus on God's love for 'Internationals' He's brought among us. **We're looking at the Bible as one book with an introduction, story & conclusion. In the introduction, God creates linguistically diverse people groups. Then the story begins with the two part Abrahamic Covenant found in Genesis 12:1-3 which includes God's desire to bless Abraham as the top line. Then His desire to have Abraham be a blessing to all nations as the bottom line. And we see God's unifying these diverse people groups under Himself for His glory & our joy.**

But most Christians read only half their Bibles. Focused only on God's desire to bless them, they neglect God's desire to have us bless the nations. We realize what we've learned isn't incorrect, but it's sometimes incomplete! In missing the bottom line, we don't see God's great love for other people groups & His desire for us to be reaching out to them, even right here in our local area among internationals He's brought to us.

When you want to buy a certain car, you start seeing it everywhere! Think about how many internationals you see daily. Indonesians at the Farmers Market, Arabs walking their kids in the park, Guatemalans in a restaurant. Today we'll see how God looked out for the foreigner/internationals in the Old Testament, both theologically & practically how God treated all nations equally.

Let's begin from a theological perspective. In light of the offerings to be given to the Lord, we read these words in Numbers 15:15... *"The community is to have the same rules for you & for the foreigner residing among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You & the foreigner shall be the same before the LORD..."* Note those last words. This a place where the top equals the bottom line. God's very clear, He loves Israelites & foreigners equally!

We also read these words in Exodus 12:48-49... "A foreigner residing among you who wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat it. The same law applies both to the native-born & to the foreigner residing among you." God's very clear with Israel, the foreigner living among them had the right to celebrate Passover, ending with stating He treats Israelites & Internationals the same. In light of murder, we read in Leviticus 24:21-22: *"Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a human being is to be put to death. You are to have the same law for the foreigner & the native-born. I am the LORD your God."* You know

you're truly equal when you're held to the same standards as everyone else! He loves us equally!

Now that we've seen God giving community rules which applied to both Jews & foreigners, let's look at the practical aspect of how God treated them. We'll see it in the phrase, *"Then they will know that I am the Lord."* God did many things in Israel's history to get their attention & drive this truth home. As in the context of 1 Kings 20:13 where the king of Israel is being attacked by 33 other kings & their armies. It doesn't look good. Israel's outnumbered. But a prophet came to King Ahab, Israel's king & said this... *"This is what the LORD says: 'Do you see this vast army? I will give it into your hand today, and then you will know that I am the LORD.'"*

The words *"And then"* says there's a meaning clause following. God wants them to know He's the Lord & can deliver. He wants their attention on Himself. He wants them to worship & rest in Him. But this phrase, *"Then you will know that I am the Lord"* applied to the other nations as well!

And...right in the middle of the Ten Plagues, God lets it be known that part of the reason for bringing His people out with mighty acts & wonders was for the Egyptians' sake. Look at Exodus 7:4-5... *"Then I will lay my hand on Egypt & with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD..."* Last week we saw how the Israelites went out with *"many other people."* Others = Egyptians, because God loved the Egyptians as much as He loved Israel. There was probably close to 2 million people leaving, the wording suggests they were like a swarm exiting Egypt at that time!

In Ezekiel 25:1-5, God's reaching out to the Ammonites in the same way. Listen to the first five verses. *"The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, set your face against the Ammonites & prophesy against them. Say to them, 'Hear the word of the Sovereign LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you said "Aha!" over my sanctuary when it was desecrated & over the land of Israel when it was laid waste & over the people of Judah when they went into exile, therefore I am going to give you to the people of the East as a possession. They will set up their camps & pitch their tents among you; they will eat your fruit & drink your milk. I will turn Rabbah into a pasture for camels & Ammon into a resting place for sheep. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"* Although God was judging them for their actions, He's reaching out to them at the same time! Again because God loved the Ammonites just as much as He loved the Israelites. He treats them equally.

He reached out to the Moabites, Edomites & Philistines in Ezekiel 25. The people of Tyre in chapter 26. In chapter 28, the Sidonites. In chapter 29, the Egyptians. God was constantly reaching out to people from other nations! We've looked at it theologically & practically. God made it very clear He was reaching, not only Israelites, but all other nations, which is the greatest reason He blesses us. We see this in the Old & not just the New Testament. But not only does God supernaturally reach out to them, He wants to work through us to reach them! He had two strategies. One was to let the nations come

to Israel. The other was to cause Israel to go to the nations (dust, stars & sand). We'll emphasize the first strategy today, how God's bringing Internationals to live among us. We find this clearly through the bottom line lesson of Solomon & his riches.

God blessed Solomon greatly. And if you have a top-line-is-greater-than-bottom-line perspective, you look at his life & say... "I learn from this, God wants to bless me as He blessed Solomon." True & real. It's top line & not incorrect, but it is incomplete. *We find the bottom-line lesson of Solomon's riches in 1 Kings 10:23-24... "King Solomon was greater in riches & wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart."* Solomon was holding International Wisdom Seminars! Kings & queens came from all over to hear the wisdom God had given Him. He was probably teaching from the book of Proverbs which was generic, without mentioning directly the God of Israel, and all about wisdom. But He taught that the beginning of wisdom is to fear God. Solomon was witnessing to kings & queens. The bottom line lesson? God may be blessing us in order to attract other peoples. The bottom-line application? God's blessed us with tremendous insights & wealth, internationals come the world over to study here! And God's saying, "Wake up American church...begin to reach out to those I've brought to you!"

God wants us to reach international students studying in the United States. Have them over for Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas, be in relationship, invite them... etc! To simply engage in easy ways of showing them love! But if you've only been reading half of your Bible (focused solely on the top line), you'll have missed God's emphasis on this in the Old Testament. And it's not only in the Old Testament we see God's heart for internationals. Jesus also makes it very clear that internationals are a priority on God's heart. But if you're only focused on the top line, you'll easily miss it!

In the beginning of the New Testament in Matthews Gospel, the genealogy of Christ is very interesting. There are only five women mentioned, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Uriah's wife (Bathsheba) and Mary. Outside of Mary, the mother of Jesus, they were all Gentiles! God's communicating people of other nations have an equally close place in His heart. Judaism didn't give women a high status but God puts these Gentile women in the lineage of His son! He's saying He loves all peoples equally.

We also see this in the actions of Jesus. When the ten lepers were healed, only one of them came back to thank Jesus. *Let's look at Luke 17:11-18... "Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria & Galilee. 12As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" 14When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. 15One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16He threw himself at Jesus' feet & thanked him - and he was a Samaritan. 17Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19Then he said to him, "Rise & go; your faith has made you well."*

Why did this even make it into the story? If you look this up in commentaries, you find interesting insights. All seek to give an answer as to why the one came back & most claiming it was because of his faith. Although we agree with that, it's not the main point of the story. It's not incorrect, but it is incomplete. They're missing the bottom line. This guy's highlighted because he was a Samaritan. Samaritans were considered half breeds, Jewish & Gentile blood mixed together. Straight Gentile blood would've been easier for Jews to accept, but a mixture would've been detestable! Why not a Jewish man coming back & thanking God? Why's the Samaritan highlighted?

This struck at the heart of the Jews listening, cutting deeply into their strong top-line bias, communicating a few things. First, God loved Samaritans to heal them. Second, Samaritans could have faith in God. Third, they too could praise God & He'd receive it. Jesus is elevating a Samaritan's position before God. Shaking the Jews up who thought the Messiah was only for them. But some Bible expositors miss it, because they're living out a top-line-greater-than-bottom-line faith! Texts like this go unnoticed.

Most Christians today don't even think twice about the fact that Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, people from non-Christian people groups, can come to know the Lord. Yet, we simply walk by them without saying a prayer, or even thinking God loves them & wants to reach them, let alone through us. As Jesus emphasized loving people from other nations, some people were furious because they only wanted God for themselves.

Let's look at one of those instances in Luke 4...*"Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three & a half years & there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."* Note, the Widow & Naaman are Gentiles. Jesus is talking about how Elijah was taken care of by a Gentile widow (though there were many Jewish ones there), and how Elisha only cleansed one leper, a Gentile (though there were plenty of Jewish ones). And what was the result of Jesus saying this? *"All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of town...."* People don't like having their self-serving theology challenged. And with Jesus openly declaring the Messiah & God's love were available to Gentiles as well as Jews, He totally upset the apple cart.

Are some people today furious when others, possibly people from other nations come to our churches? Possibly, I've had those conversations. What would happen if a Saudi Muslim wearing a Shemagh & Thawb walked into church on a Sunday morning? How'd we react? How'd we react to a homeless man or woman coming in, reeking of alcohol & urine? We'd like to say we'd be accepting, but some must admit concern. Although we may have some problems with the idea of reaching out to those different from us, Jesus repeatedly made it very clear, internationals are a priority.

We see this in John 10:14-16 where we read...*“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep & my sheep know me - ¹⁵just as the Father knows me & I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock & one shepherd.”* A clear statement of unity in diversity under Christ. The pen = Israel. Other sheep = Gentile Nations. Jesus meant to bring Gentile together with Jew! His plan from the very beginning with Abraham! As He says, ‘they too will listen to my voice’, He means they’re able to hear God’s voice & respond.

When you go shopping, out to eat, or get gas, and see people of another ethnic group behind the counter, or shopping next to you, what do you think Jesus wants you to think about them? Could it be, they might be hearing God’s voice - that God’s present & working in their lives & it’s a divine moment. God may be speaking to them & they may not know who to talk to about it.

According to His words it’s Jesus’ responsibility to bring them to the Father. But He works through us. So what might God want us to do when we see someone from another nation? Maybe we should get to know them & begin a relationship! I have a Vietnamese friend. In Vietnam his family was Buddhist. His father was a very successful restaurant owner. When war broke out his father sold all assets, gave away his wealth to his employees, keeping just enough to get his family to America. Once here, his father struggled along working menial jobs to support his family. Many foreign workers are highly educated successful people at home, but come to America due to some hardship & have to restart. The father met Christians here who cared for, housed, provided for & shared the Gospel with them. The family gave their lives to Christ & to this day are very active Christians!

God’s heart is so big for people from other nations He devoted an entire parable of a wedding banquet to describe it. **Look at Matthew 22:1-10...*“Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.’”***

The king represents God. The Son is Jesus. Those who’d been invited represent the Jews. It continues...*“Then he sent some more servants & said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen & fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’”* The servants represent the prophets whom God has consistently sent to Israel to remind them of God’s Word. *“But they paid no attention & went off - one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them & killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army & destroyed those murderers & burned their city.”*

Indignant & indifferent, concerned only with their own busy lives. Sounds familiar. It continues...*“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners & invite to the banquet anyone you find.’”* When He speaks of those on the ‘street corners’ & ‘anyone’ He speaks

of other nations. We've seen in past sermons, the Jews are 'chosen' not because they're loved more, but because God gave them a special purpose to reach these nations. He's communicating, the Jewish nation, God's chosen people, are being passed over if they won't be a part of His plan. He's looking to the Gentiles to also be wed to His son. *"So the servants went out into the streets & gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests."*

Jews listening to this would've been livid - they hated the Gentiles. How do some Christians today respond if we say God loves terrorists, or even Muslims, as much as us? That we should embrace & not shun them? Some of you may even be conflicted.

Nowhere does Jesus bring it closer to home than in the parable of the Good Samaritan which begins with an expert in the law testing Jesus. He asks, *"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"* Jesus doesn't answer directly, but asks a question in return, *"What is written in the law? How do you read it?"* He answers correctly, one must love God & his neighbor. But then the expert seeks to justify himself, asking, *"Who is my neighbor?"* At this point, Jesus tells a story about a man beaten by robbers in Luke 10:30-37: *"In reply Jesus said... 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him & went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place & saw him, passed by on the other side.'*

Both Priests & Levites were privileged religious leaders. The Greek gives the idea it was by chance the priest happened to be going down the road, maybe returning from service at the Temple, or going to it. Which was a good sign for the man beaten. Surely a priest, spiritually close to God, would help him. But no. He passes by on the other side. Same too with the Levite. Why'd they pass by? According to ceremonial law found in Leviticus, if a priest enters a place where there's a dead body, he'd be considered ceremonially unclean, and the process of seeking purity afterwards is inconvenient. Being 'half dead' as Jesus described the man meant he might not have been moving so they didn't want to take any chances on being near a dead person. On the other hand, there's plenty of Old Testament Scripture which speaks of helping those in need. But they placed personal convenience over help. As a result they made a mockery of God's law...it was extremely selfish & racist!

Today it's not religious rule-keeping which makes us like the Priest & Levite. It may be prejudice, but more likely it's busyness, schedules, kids', tiredness, etc. Just as Jesus was chiding the Jews listening to the story, He's also telling us not to let these things get in the way of helping others in need. Finally, Jesus talks about a Samaritan... *"But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him & bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil & wine."*

Remember, Samaritans were half-breeds which Jews hated. So what happens? The man had pity on him, goes to him, bandaging his wounds by pouring oil & wine on them. He then puts the man on his own donkey & takes him to an inn, paying to have him cared for!

This cost him time, delayed his schedule. He bandaged the man. Oil & wine acted like a disinfectant. He was willing to get his hands dirty to show kindness. It cost him financially. Helping people means you'll have to spend your own money to drive, pay for supplies, buy food or school supplies for underprivileged people. He also put the man on his own donkey. Like us being willing to drive someone who needs a ride; international students, the homeless, or an elderly person. Should *we* be doing stuff like this today? Of course. *Look at how Jesus concludes... "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go & do likewise." What was Jesus telling His listeners then & now? God's mercy needs to be a higher priority than our personal self-serving agendas, especially to those different than us.*

God love's those Internationals all around us. In class, at the grocery store, on your block, at gas stations...wherever you find them. What's one practical thing you can do this week to act on this message? Start praying for people you meet on the train. Invite someone to dinner. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you aware of internationals around you. Start to pray for divine conversations with them. Take one of those Bibles over on the side & train yourself how to share the Gospel so you'll be ready. Write out your testimony & have a few solid Christians read through it to be ready to share it. Pray through the Islamic month of Ramadan which started on the 13th for Muslims in our area to find Jesus! Maybe we can make room in our schedules & homes for them, and God will be glorified as a result?