

IN THIS ARTICLE I want to discuss what God is saying about discipling the nations. Much of what I will be sharing from the Scripture cannot possibly come to pass if it is received only within a human context. Therefore, I will

be speaking out of revelation, not primarily to your intellect, but to your *faith*. It is necessary that your intellect be involved, but if you do not have a faith faculty, you cannot respond to revelation for "... the natural man receiveth not the

things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14 KJV). If you do not have a faith factor in your spiritual constitution, you cannot receive reve-

Perspective for a Decade:

Discipling the Nations
by Em Baxter

lation.

The purpose of this article is to reveal the ultimate reality of what God is saying about the nations and how He intends to deal with them. But to understand God's dealings with nations, we first need to know something about prophets. Prophets are the divine voice of God's ultimate authority to the nations of the earth. One such voice was Jeremiah, and in his writings we find this passage which defines the prophetic role:

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

"See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:4-5, 10 NAS).

Jeremiah had a commission from God, and this made the words the prophet spoke matters of ultimate importance. God said to Jeremiah, "I have chosen you to be an overseer of the nations. I am going to channel My word to you and through you, and what you say as My delegated voice in the earth will ultimately affect the destiny of nations."

The nations, then, are ultimately subject to the redemptive and judgmental word of God's delegated vice-regents, *the prophets*, of whom Jesus is chief. The final authority in the earth is not the United Nations, nor the Vati-

can, nor Washington, D.C., nor any other headquarter of earthly rule. The source of ultimate authority is the Word of God, which God channels through men of His choosing—and you and I have to receive that revelation by faith.

It is God's purpose, by His word transmitted through chosen men, to create a community of prophetic authority which will be

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the delegated authority of God in the earth. This prophetic community must speak to the nations, ministering to them, healing them, and bringing them under the rule of Jesus Christ. We are a responsible part of that prophetic community which is informed by the Word, instructed by the Word and inspired by the Word.

The Word of God is ultimate. The Word is the final court of appeal in all matters pertaining to doctrine and conduct; it is the final authority in all matters of what God is like, what man is like, what nations are like, and where history is going. Therefore, in this article, I want to present from the Word biblical data on nations which will help us know how God regards the nations.

The Providential Work of God

First of all, I want to discuss the providential work of God, which is

His sovereign right to govern all of His creation. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1 KJV). The world belongs to God. God creates nations; they don't just happen. Psalm 86:9 says, "*All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name*" (KJV).

God has creational and proprietary right to all nations because He made them. They didn't come about by some fortuitous concurrence of atoms—they are the product of God's creative, providential purpose.

Job 12:23 says, "He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away." In other words, God is the God *who determines history*. History is not happenstance. To the Christian, history is tied in with the Alpha and the Omega. Behind all history is His unerring purpose.

The philosophy of history that we as Christians must embrace is one that sees God as the God of history, who works all things after the counsel of His own will. I don't believe in second causes. I believe that when history winds up, the entire universe will join in a paean of praise that will echo throughout the corridors of infinity and declare that God is God, that beside Him there is none other and that He has done all things according to His will. When history comes to the end of all of its elaborate perplexities, historians will look back with wonder as they see the pattern of infinite intricacy that God has woven through the centuries. As Psalm 22:28 says, "For the kingdom is the Lord's,



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and *He rules over the nations.*"

If you do not believe God rules the nations, you might as well not even try to respond to the great commission to disciple all nations. We must know beyond a doubt that we are part of the prophetic community, and that we share in the anointing of Jeremiah for the pastoral care of the nations. We are not a band of slaves and underlings wandering through life aimlessly; we have the dignity and poise of the sons of God and we are the delegates of high heaven. We are the people of God destined to be co-rulers with King Jesus. We are the men and women through whom, under God, history is going to be made.

You didn't choose yourself when you were converted to Jesus Christ; you were called like Lazarus was called out of the tomb. Dwight L. Moody said that if Jesus had just said, "Come

participating part of a prophetic community that recognizes that God is exercising His rulership over the nations. The God of time, space and history is the One who providentially rules the nations.

God's Redemptive Role

Now that we have seen God's providential role in the earth, we want to examine His redemptive role as it relates to the nations. In Psalm 67:1-2 we read:

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us; may your ways be known on earth, your salvation among all the nations (NIV).

God's salvation for the nations must come out of the blessing that rests upon the redeemed community. The prophetic community is the instrument of God to bring about the salvation of the nations.

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forth," instead of "*Lazarus, come forth,*" the whole graveyard would have come forth. Every man and woman who names the name of Christ is the result of a direct, sovereign, regenerative command of God, who stood at the tomb of your spiritual deadness and cried your name. And you came stumbling out in your grave clothes and stood there mumbling through your face cloth until godly men came, unbound you, and let you see light.

What I want to accomplish in this article is to liberate you to a sense of your destiny, to make you see that you are something more than a little mob of people waiting to die and go to heaven. We are here to give light to the earth, to salt the world and, under God, to make history. We are a vital, par-

This is based on the promise in Genesis 18:17-18 where God spoke to Abraham:

And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?"

God's promise to Abraham was that in him all the nations would be blessed, and the provision for that promise is in the witness of the prophetic community. You and I are part of the prophetic community that is to bring the nations to the feet of King Jesus. We are the corporate Jeremiah. We are the community of the prophetic word, and as a community we are today what Jeremiah and the other

prophets were to God in their day. A prophet of God is a man who stands in the counsel of God and speaks for Him. A prophetic community is a community of people who stand in the tradition of the prophetic word, who speak that word and act that word on behalf of God.

I believe that today God is speaking through the Church of Jesus Christ as a prophetic community to all the earth. God's purpose is to save the nations. I have a hard time handling the exclusivism and narrowness many Christians seem to have, because those attitudes contradict the very heart of the gospel: "God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten son. . . ." "Go into *all the world* and make disciples of all the nations. . . ." "Jesus Christ tasted death for *every man*. . . ." When Jesus bled His life out on Calvary, ascended into the presence of God and sat down at the right hand of God as Prince and Savior, He reached down and wrote His signature in bold script across the earth. He said, "It is mine. I have redeemed it. I claim *every nation*." For the Father had said to Him, "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thy inheritance" (Ps. 2:8). Jesus Christ is not savior of just a small select group—His signature is written in characters of redeeming blood over *every nation*, and He will not be content until the earth sings in unison an anthem declaring that Jesus Christ is Lord.

What is the ultimate result of this redemption? Let's look at Isaiah 2:1-2:

The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it.

This scripture is also speaking to

our faith out of revelation, that we may receive that which the God who makes history and whose signature is Alpha and Omega has spoken to the prophets as infallible. God has declared that He is going to put His government above

revelation out of faith and say, like Mary, "Be it done, Lord, according to Your word."

A Covenant Nation

In order for God's kingdom to be established among all nations,

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all other governments, and the nations are going to bow down before it. As certainly as the Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth to see Solomon's temple, so God is going to bring nations to bow their knees before King Jesus at the trumpet voice of God's prophetic community. This is what God is going to do, simply because He is God and He said He would do it.

When that great, imposing and impressive angel stood before Mary, a little peasant virgin, and told her she was going to have a son, she responded in a very normal, human way. "How can these things be, seeing I have not known a man?" The angel replied, "The power of the Holy One shall overshadow you and that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Mary still did not understand the mechanics of it—she could not recall a single instance where anyone had ever had a child apart from cohabitation with a male. But even though she didn't understand, she responded to that revelation by faith, saying, "Be it unto me according to thy word."

In the same way, if God says there will be a time when the power of the Holy Spirit will come upon the nations and that He will do a work in them and they will come streaming to the government of God, then we should believe it. We don't know how it will happen, but we should respond to that

we must understand our corporate role as God's covenant nation. In Exodus 19:5-6 God says to the nation of Israel:

"Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession *among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine*; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

God's purpose for Israel was that they be the prophetic, corporate voice to the world, but they failed. Israel was God's covenant nation—He walked with them and protected them—and yet they continuously turned away from Him. Scripture records how Jesus looked over Jerusalem and lamented, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem! *How oft* would I have gathered you?" Into those two little words, "how oft," is written page after page of heart-breaking history as God stood back and watched Israel, the darling of His heart, repeatedly go astray and turn their back on Him, setting up stone idols and hydra-headed monsters to worship in place of the one true Jehovah. "How oft would I have gathered you. Again and again I would have brought you back, but because of your stubbornness, the time has come when My patience is exhausted and My moral obligation demands that I bring judgment." And in Matthew 21:43, we read the awful words

which complete His judgment:

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

I want it to be absolutely clear that I do *not* mean that God's covenant with ethnic Israel has been set aside. What I am saying is that the fulfillment of that covenant may be different from what we supposed. When Jesus told the representatives of Israel that the kingdom given to them as the prophetic community in the earth would be taken from them and given to a nation producing the fruits thereof, the nation He spoke of is clearly defined as the redeemed people of God, those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is God's ultimate gift, God's ultimate word, God's ultimate redeemer, and every Jew or Gentile who comes to God will come to Him through Jesus Christ. God has formed the new nation out of Jews and Gentiles alike, breaking down the middle wall of partition, making one new body under the headship of Jesus Christ. *That* has become the nation with which God is dealing redemptively and prophetically, and it is into *that* nation that ethnic Israel, in the hour of her destiny, will come for salvation. Israel shall be saved with the same kind of salvation that you and I have. They will repent, they will be baptized, they will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and they will come pouring into the predominately Gentile people of God, and the world will be enriched at the combination of those two entities, bound together in Jesus' blood and His Spirit.

The Ultimate Victory

All history is part of the majestic unfolding of God's ultimate victory, and in conclusion, we will consider that ultimate victory and its implications for us today. The Father, speaking to Jesus, said:

Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thy inheritance (Ps. 2:8).

That Jesus asked for and received that inheritance is clear from His declaration in Matthew 28:18: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." In light of this authority He then issued a command to us: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." (vs. 19). I believe that He meant just that. It is a shame that some Christians have misinterpreted this high mandate, causing it to become a matter of simply handing out a few tracts to salve their consciences. Nevertheless, there is a mandate resting on us as the prophetic nation that requires us to *disciple the nations* of the earth.

By faith, we must respond in a practical way to the command Jesus has given us to go and disciple the nations. Here are six practical suggestions for responding in faith to that revelation.

1. *Think biblically of the nations.* Not politically, not economically, not culturally, not sociologically, but biblically. View the nations as your inheritance *and your responsibility*, because God rules them and loves them.

2. *Contribute to the unity of the witnessing prophetic community.* A scripture relevant to this is Jeremiah 4:1-2:

"If you will return, O Israel," declares the Lord, "Then you should return to Me. And if you will put away your detested things from My presence, And will not waver, and you will swear, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness; Then the nations will bless themselves in Him, and in Him they will glory."

Let us do everything in our power to bring about the restoration of the redeemed community. Let us work avidly and industriously at breaking down the causes of disunity, for only when the redeemed prophetic community functions in

the purity of its calling will the nations hear the trumpet call of the gospel.

3. *Consider ways to address the nations.* We need to realize that we are not just a little group of nobodies. We stand in the tradition of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Zephaniah, Malachi and all the other prophets. We are members of a prophetic community that is destined to speak to world leaders, and we have to consider ways to address the nations. Pray for your leaders so they will know how to speak a word into the totality of national and international life.

4. *Proclaim truth as it relates to every area of life.* I am glad to see Christians starting to speak into

tion of what it has forgotten, we stand in the true tradition of the prophetic community.

6. *Engage in regular and unceasing community prayer for all men and all leaders.* You may want to reject much of what I have said, but you cannot reject the apostolic command to us as the prophetic witnessing community when we come together:

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

The Word of God declares that all nations shall come to Him, and we are the prophetic instrument to help bring this to pass.

the areas of economy, education, culture and politics. The Lordship of Jesus Christ extends much further than just over a soul that is going to heaven or hell. It reaches over the entire creation which needs to function under the government of God in a time-space world. Let us proclaim truth as it relates to every area of life.

5. *Remind the nations of what they have forgotten.* Psalm 9:17 says, "The wicked will return to Sheol, Even all the nations who forget God." It is our responsibility to remind the nations of what they have forgotten. I am grateful that in the recent election there were men with moral courage who stood up and, under the fire of the nasty darts of critics, boldly and straightforwardly said to America, "You have forgotten the sanctity of human life. You have forgotten the sanctity of the human body. You have forgotten God's right to declare His own laws. *You have forgotten.*" When we remind our na-

Until we respond to this apostolic mandate, we have no right to criticize our nation. We have no right to scorn the corrupt politician. We have no right to complain about the evil conduct of government officials until we have wrapped these men around with the prayer of an authoritative prophetic community. Until we have corporately importuned God to release righteousness in high places, we have no right to lift our voices in one single syllable of criticism.

The time has come for us to be more than just a soul-saving force. The time has come for us to be a nation-saving force—a world-saving force! We are to become the prophetic community that represents the God of the prophets, declaring and enacting His eternal Word and discipling the nations. The Word of God declares that all nations shall come to Him, and we are the prophetic instrument to help bring this to pass. ♣