

## “My Name Will Be Great among the Nations” (Malachi 1:11)

*For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering.  
For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.  
(Malachi 1:11 ESV)*

God’s name speaks of His nature, His attributes, His glory, His absolute uniqueness as the Creator, and His utter holiness. In Isaiah 42:8: God declares:

*I am the LORD; that is My name;  
My glory I give to no other,  
nor My praise to carved idols.*

He’s saying: My *name* is mine alone, my *glory* is mine alone, my *worship* is mine alone. The Psalmist understood that when he wrote in Ps 115:1:

*Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory.*

Glory belongs to God alone, and his name speaks of that glory. That’s why the third commandment says that his name is not to be taken in vain—that is, it is not to be uttered lightly or flippantly or as an oath or as a curse or as a profanity or for any reason other than to lift up that name in *worship*. God’s Name is unspeakably holy, because it represents him who is unspeakably holy.

And as see in Malachi 1:11, God’s intention and plan and purpose is for his name to be seen as great among the nations; for the peoples of the earth to bow down in worship and acknowledge him as Creator and Redeemer.

We want to survey briefly that great theme: the *trajectory* of human history: God at work to *make his name great*, to show himself glorious and almighty and merciful and gracious.

### HUMANITY’S REBELLION

We learn of course early in the Scriptures that humanity had another idea (Genesis 3; see also Romans 1:1–25).

After sin infected the human race through the fall, we see men and women running the other way. Case in point: the inhabitants of Babel in Genesis 11, who instead of filling the earth according to God’s command, instead huddled together and sought to build a great monument to themselves as they pridefully declared: “*Let us make a name FOR OURSELVES*” (v. 4). In their pride they wanted to exalt their own name, not God’s.

So we read that God confused their language, and “*dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth*” (v. 8). This judgment of God results in the formation of nations and cultures.

(This confusion of languages is why we have to study Greek and Hebrews and other languages, why missionaries have to spend year learning the language of their target group, why

translators are needed for international events, and so on. That's all the result of God's judgement at Babel.)

## **GOD'S PLAN FOR THE NATIONS**

And yet, while God has forced the formation of nations, God has a plan for those nations, as we see already in the call of Abraham: as the climax of the amazing promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, God declares that "*in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*"

While God is focusing in on one man and one family, and plans to grow one special people, one called nation, from Abraham's descendants: God's intention and plan is for *worldwide blessing* (that's why Genesis 12:1-3 is often called the "Great Commission of the Old Testament").

Even though the Old Testament is largely Israel's story, yet we see time and again glimmers of the larger purposes of God for the nations.

### **The Exodus and Its Impact**

God's purpose in the Exodus was not only to judge the false gods of Egypt and to redeem for himself a special worshiping people—but also through his mighty acts in the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea to *show his name great among the surrounding nations.*

We get a glimpse of the power of that demonstration in Joshua 2, when in Jericho the harlot Rahab hides the two Israeli spies. 40 years after the fact, what God did in Egypt was still resonating among the surrounding peoples! And it had gripped Rahab's heart as well:

*"And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath"* (Joshua 2:11)

This is a profession of *faith*; and we read how Rahab and her family are spared in the destruction of Jericho; how she is enfolded into the nation of Israel; how she becomes the mother of Boaz (who married Ruth), and the great grandmother of King David himself! And *amazingly* finds her way into the family tree of the Lord Jesus himself, as we read in Matthew 1's genealogy. Such is the grace of God: that this Gentile prostitute can find her way into the ancestral line of the Savior! There is surely no hopeless cause. (As Hebrews 2:11 says: "*He is not ashamed to call [us] brethren.*")

### **Israel's Testimony**

Israel more often than not forgot its mandate to be a light to the nations; they enjoyed their status as the special chosen people of God, and looked down upon other peoples.

But the Psalmist in Psalm 67 gets it right; he has *God's perspective*. He begins by saying:

*May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face to shine upon us, (v. 1)*

*Any Jew could and would have prayed that! BUT he goes on from there to say: God, be gracious to us and bless us:*

*THAT your way may be known on earth,  
your saving power among all nations.*

*Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!  
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth. (vv. 2-4)*

God chose and blessed his people *so that* they would be a light to the nations, to the honor of God's name and the praise of his glory.

The Psalms are in fact full of commands to Israel to call the nations and peoples of earth to come to the one true God:

*Oh sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth!  
Sing to the LORD, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among the nations,  
His marvelous works among all the peoples!  
For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;  
He is to be feared above all gods.  
For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,  
but the LORD made the heavens. (96:1-5)*

*I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples;  
I will sing praises to you among the nations. (108:3)*

*All the nations you have made shall come  
and worship before you, O LORD,  
and shall glorify your name. (86:9)*

*"Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!" (46:10)*

## **New Testament**

When we come to the New Testament, we want to observe several things.

### ***Jesus***

1. Jesus not only reached out comfortably to the untouchables of Jewish society, but he in fact honored faith *wherever* He found it: in the Roman centurion, in the Syrophenician woman, in the Samaritan woman at the well.

2. In the Great Commission Jesus instructed to disciples that they were to “*make disciples of all nations*”; and, as a reminder, Jesus told them right before His ascension in Acts 1:8 that the Holy Spirit’s power would enable them to go beyond the borders of Israel to the uttermost parts of the earth with the gospel message.

### ***The Church***

1. We see on the Day of Pentecost the beginning of the end of the language curse, as miraculously the praises of God are articulated and understood in many different languages.
2. In Acts there is still some inertia and hesitancy working against going beyond the Jewish nation and accepting Gentiles as full partners in the Christian church, until at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 we have the epochal decision that flung the door wide open to all peoples to come on the basis faith alone. As Andrew Walls put it:

*“The apostolic decree of Acts 15 builds cultural diversity into the Christian church forever.”* (Andrew Walls, “The Ephesians Moment in Worldwide Worship” in *Christian Worship Worldwide*, Eerdmans 2007, 30)

### ***Romans 15***

Paul in Romans 15 draws from the OT itself to express the joy and delight of Gentiles (the Greek word is the same as “nations”) being welcomed into the family of God:

*For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the **Gentiles** might glorify God for His mercy. As it is written,*

*“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,  
and sing to Your name.”*

*And again it is said,*

*“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.”*

*And again,*

*“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
and let all the peoples extol Him.”* (Romans 15:8–11)

## **GOD’S NAME EXALTED**

Finally, we come the great scenes of worship in the book of Revelation, and see the beautiful cultural and national diversity gathered around the throne of God. The “*great multitude that no one could number*” in Revelation 7 is identifiably made of those “*from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages*” (v. 9)

Notice 2 things about this scene:

1. The innumerable throng cries out: “*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!*” (v. 10) They don’t cry: “We’re saved! We’re saved!” but “*Salvation belongs to our God.*” They are utterly *God-centered*, *God-focused*: *he* did this! *He* planned for our salvation, *He* carried out everything necessary, *he* sent his Son to the cross for our forgiveness, *he* brought us to faith. *he* did it! *True worship will always focus more on the Giver than the gift.*
2. We can see here that ultimately the judgment of God on the rebellious human race, that resulted in the formation of nations and the multiplying of languages with all the complications that have resulted—here we see that the praises of God are *multiplied* and *enriched* and *expanded* by being brought by *all* nations, people, tribes and languages. God in his sovereignty takes the worst that rebellious humanity can throw at him and *turns it to His praise!* (Of course, the ultimate example is in the crucifixion of his Son at the hands of sinful people, which God turns to our eternal good.) And here we see that God has turned rebellion, curse, and judgment into blessing and into *the magnifying of his praise*: by the nations coming with all the distinctives and diversity of their languages and their cultures and their arts. (See John Piper, “The Pride of Babel and the Praise of Christ,” <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-pride-of-babel-and-the-praise-of-christ>.)

God’s Name *will* be great among the nations: the nations which will come in all their beautiful diversity to heap praises—multilingual, multicultural praises—to the God of their salvation.

God’s Name *will* be great among all nations; and they will come, and *we* will all join in with what John in Revelation calls “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb”:

*“Great and amazing are your deeds,  
O Lord God the Almighty!  
Just and true are your ways,  
O King of the nations!*

*Who will not fear, O Lord,  
and glorify your name?  
For you alone are holy.  
All nations will come  
and worship you,  
for your righteous acts have been revealed.” (Revelation 15:3-4)*