

of David. And the New Covenant is there in the fact that this will be accomplished by the blood of the Lamb who was slain.”

God’s Great Story includes us. It includes our blessing and it includes our involvement, for it is both a Messianic story of our salvation and a Mission story of God’s special action in our general history for how all men may be saved, which includes us. And God as He blesses us also calls us to be His co-workers in the achievement of His purpose. **Jesus brings us into His new covenant in order to send us out on His great commission.** We are blessed by the Messiah to offer His Blessing to others. Going back to our beginning, it is right and good for us to rejoice in God’s Messianic blessing of our lives yet in these times between Pentecost and the new creation we are called to play our part in God’s Co-Mission purpose.

And may not that engagement in His Mission be the source of God’s present and eternal blessing of our live. Isn’t it in this context and with this intent that Jesus declares, as Matthews records, “seek first [God’s] kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things [material blessings] will be given to you as well.” [6:33] And also: “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of things, when the Son of Man sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed me ... and everyone who has left houses, or brothers or sisters or father or mother [or wife] or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.” [19:28-29]

If you would like to explore this more deeply I recommend Christopher J H Wright’s book: *The Mission of God. Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative.* Published by IVP. 2006. ISBN [paperback] 978-0-8308-5213-0.

It’s has been my source book for this reflection and the quote from it can be found on page 356.

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Reflection One on  
Acts c13 v 1 to 48  
God’s Big Mission Story

Have you ever thought that we might tend to a rather personalised view of our relationship with God, and thus a rather unbalanced view. A view which focuses on how God gives purpose to the story of our life, and may fail to see how our lives fit into the story of God’s purposes.

**The New Testament tells us that God acted** through Christ to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross [Colossians 1:20], destroying the devil’s work [1John 3:8b] so to present us holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation [Colossians 1:22]. **This is God’s Great Mission Purpose.** It is the purpose to which Jesus, under His authority and in His presence, appoints us to carry out in His great statement of co-mission [Matthew 28:18-20].

And it is for that mission purpose that Christ empowers us in the Holy Spirit [Acts 1:5 & 8; 2: 39] makes us His co-workers [1Corinthians 3:9] representative agents, or ambassadors [2Corinthians 5:19-20], and servants of His workmanship to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. [Ephesians 2:10]

Peter in Acts 2 and Paul in Acts 13, with slightly different emphases according to their context – Paul telling the story with an eye on the listening Gentiles - both express what God is doing, His Great Mission Purpose, as revealed in the stream of Israel’s history: through Abraham, through the founding of Israel as a nation and through the kingship of David leading to Christ Jesus. In whom Paul declares especially for the ears of the Gentiles, people can be forgiven their sins and justified from everything they could not be justified from by the Law of Moses.

**God’s Great Mission Purpose is rooted in His promises to Abraham.** Before Abraham’s call we see a world of fallen humanity and rebellious nations. In Abraham’s call we see God’s will to bless this world and its nations: all peoples on earth, God tells Abraham, will be blessed through you. [Gen 12:3b]. A promise dramatically re-affirmed through God’s challenge to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, leading to Him say “I swear by myself ... [that] through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.” [Gen 22:18] God in Abraham was choosing Israel, not to be

blessed in contrast to every other nation, but to be His blessed for His purpose of blessing all the nations.

God's will to bless the nations is taken up further in the **founding of Israel at Mount Sinai**, in which God says to Israel through Moses, "Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." [Ex 19:6]. Just as the priests of Israel represented God to the people and the people to God, so Israel would represent God to the nations and the nations to God.

**Israel was also to be God's holy nation**, that is a people set apart from others for the service of God, and in that service to reveal the character of God, by being righteous. Hence we come to a tricky thought. **Israel was called to be obedient to God's covenant**. It was not that 'if you are obedient I will make you my people', but rather 'your being my people calls you to obedience'. Obedience was not for them or for us a condition of salvation, but a condition, or if you prefer the word, a consequence that flows from our being saved.

And from these dual aspects flows the covenant fruit of God's presence. As God promises in Leviticus "I will walk among you and be your God and you will be My people." [26:12] And what is true of Israel – the enjoyment of God's presence - would eventually be true for all who would enter into the blessing of God through His fulfilling His promise to Abraham.

Later, God turns Israel's rebellious demand for a king into a further expression of His covenant with Abraham. David a man after God's own heart, as Paul calls him in Acts which means, as Paul goes on to explain, that David is a man who will carry out God's purposes, who will "do everything [God] want[s] him to do" [13:22]. David's kingship was just over Israel yet as scripture reveals, **from his line a ruler will come** whose rule will be universal. The rule not of an Alexander the Great style conqueror but the rule of a Prince of Peace, a suffering servant: "It is," God declares through Isaiah, "too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." [49:6 and Acts 13:47]. Paul as well as Peter [Acts 2:25-36] referring to **Jesus' Davidic descent alongside His resurrection showing that He is the promised Messiah**.

Jesus fulfils the sacrifice system in His death on the cross. He abolished the laws of clean and unclean foods, which symbolised Israel's distinctiveness as a nation, because what they symbolised no longer has any significance in Christ, for in Him Jew and Gentile are one. [Ephesians 2:11-22] It was a word deliberately spoken for

the blessing of the Gentiles when Paul said that through Christ "**everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.**" [13:39] This was not a filling up of loop-holes but a fulfilment of the Law by Christ, which means that it is now Jesus we should follow not Moses. A revelation especially important to Gentile males who were often coming into full covenant commitment to God by the need for circumcision.

*[However Paul was not saying that the moral and spiritual obligations of the Sinai Law, by which God's people could be made a fit dwelling place for His presence, were overthrown and the misunderstanding of this, then and now, led and still leads Christians to act in ways contrary to their covenant calling to be God's holy nation. But that's for another day]*

**And everything comes together in Jesus**. He is the seed of Abraham in whom all nations are to be blessed. He is the prophet like Moses whom God's people are to obey, [Acts 7:37 and Deuteronomy 18:15] who takes people beyond Law into Grace and Truth [John 1:14], the Son of David whose reign is unending and the Suffering Servant who has Himself become God's covenant, [Isaiah 55:3b-5] He is our permanent high priest, holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens, made perfect for ever. [Hebrews 7:24-28] He is the living Tabernacle of God who made His dwelling with us [John 3:14], and promises that if we love Him, shown by obeying His teaching, He and His Father will make their home with us. [John 14:23] In Him all God's promises of covenant blessing are realised. [2 Corinthians 1:20] Through Him God's covenant blessings are offered to the nations. Paul sees Israel being redefined to include Gentiles in Christ. [Ephesians 2:11-22], in which we can also see that in Christ we are being built together to become a spiritual house in which God lives, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to Him, [1Peter 2:9] for which He calls to be living sacrifices, no longer conforming to the world, but to be transformed to seek His good, pleasing and perfect will [Romans 12:1-3]

**God's Great Mission Story comes to its completion** in the new creation, revealed to us in the book of Revelation, in which as Christopher Wright summarises:

"Noah is there in the vision of a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth after judgement. Abraham is there in the ingathering and blessing of all nations from every tribe and language. Moses is there in the covenantal assertion that 'they will be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God', and the dwelling of God is with men and He will live with them'. David is there in the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, and in the identity of Jesus as the Lion of Judah and Root