

CHAPTER 2

ISRAEL—A MISSIONARY NATION

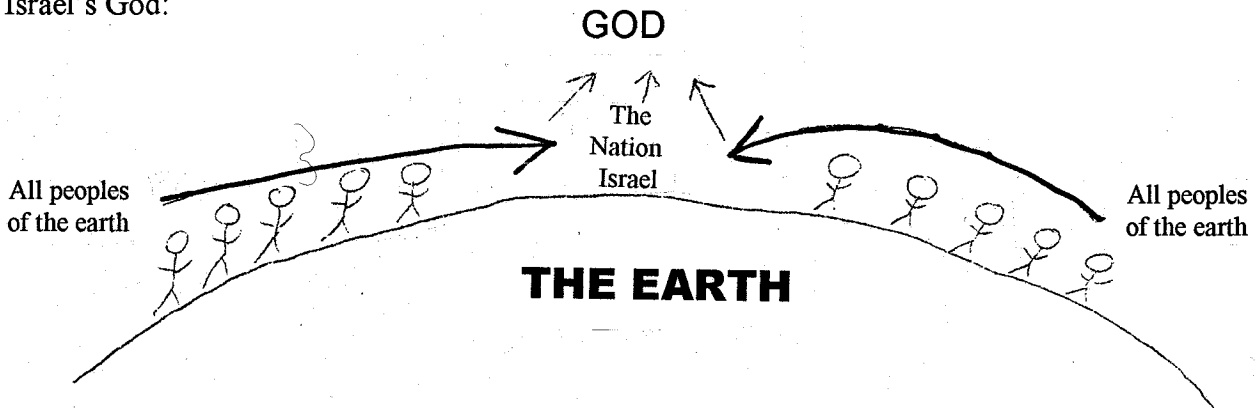
God wants to make Himself known far and wide. Long ago God called Abram (Abraham) and He blessed this man in a special way (Genesis 12:1-3). Out of this man came a nation and this nation was called ISRAEL.

God's choosing of the nation Israel is described in Deuteronomy 7:6—"For thou art an **holy** (set apart) people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a _____ people unto Himself, above _____ that are upon the face of the earth." God set His love on this particular nation and chose them to be His special people (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

Why did the Lord choose Israel and make Israel a special nation? Was it because God wanted to bless the nation of Israel and curse all the other nations of the earth or was it because God wanted to bless Israel so that all the other nations of the earth could be blessed through the nation Israel? The answer is found in Genesis chapter 12. Did God promise to bless the nation that would come out of Abraham (Genesis 12:2)? _____ What about all the other families of the earth that did not come from Abraham? Did God care about them? Did God want them to know about the true God? Did God want to save Israel and damn all the other nations? Look at the end of Genesis 12:3—"and in thee shall _____ of the earth be _____." God wanted to use one nation to bless ALL NATIONS! God wanted to use the family of Abraham to bless all the families of the earth. God's heart of concern reached out to ALL.

The same should be true for us. Has God SAVED YOU (see 2 Timothy 1:9)? Has God CHOSEN YOU (see 2 Thessalonians 2:13)? Has God BLESSED YOU (see Ephesians 1:3)? If these things are so, why are they so? Did God bless you and the other people who are saved so that He could curse and condemn everyone else that is not saved? Or, did God bless you so that He might be able to bless others **through** you? God wants believers to have a certain kind of "SMELL" (SAVOUR). It is called the SAVOUR OF HIS K _____ (2 Cor. 2:14). God wants believers to live in such a way that His special SAVOUR or perfume (aroma) might be noticed by those who are not saved, so that many of them might come to know Him too (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

When God blessed the nation Israel and set this nation apart, He had the other nations in view. God wanted all the peoples of the world to look at the nation Israel so that they would come to know Israel's God:



God wanted people everywhere to come to know Him. Therefore God chose Israel to be His special nation, that all the other nations would know that this special nation has a very special God. Israel was to be a signpost that would point very clearly to the only true God.

God's Witness on Earth

Who is God speaking to in Isaiah 43:1? _____

_____ This nation belonged to God in a very special way (Isaiah 43:1,21). In Isaiah 43:10 God spoke to this nation and said this: "Ye are My _____, saith the LORD, and My servant whom I have _____: that ye may know and believe Me and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me." Is He the only LORD and the only SAVIOUR (Isaiah 43:11)? _____

The word "WITNESS" comes from a verb which means "to say something again and again." In Isaiah 43:10 a WITNESS may be defined as "one who strengthens or confirms the saying of another." Israel, as God's witness, was to strengthen and confirm the saying of God Himself:

GOD SAYS ⇨

"I AM THE ONLY GOD, THE ONLY LORD AND THE ONLY SAVIOUR. THERE IS NONE ELSE!"

GOD'S WITNESS SAYS ⇨

"YES! HE IS THE ONLY GOD, THE ONLY LORD AND THE ONLY SAVIOUR. THERE IS NONE ELSE! TURN FROM YOUR FALSE GODS AND TURN TO THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD!"

The nation Israel was to draw attention to the fact that the LORD was the only God: "ye are My witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am _____ (Isaiah 43:12). "Ye are even My _____.

Is there a God beside _____? yea, there is no God (beside Me), I know not _____" (Isaiah 44:8).

God had His witnesses on earth. God put His special people in the land of Palestine that through them He might make Himself known. Was God only concerned about those people living in Palestine who belonged to His special nation, or was God also concerned about people living *throughout the earth* (see Isaiah 45:22)? _____

The Missionary Chapter

The 4th chapter in the book of Deuteronomy has been called the "missionary chapter" of the Old Testament. How did God want His people to live? Did He want His people to ignore or closely follow His Word (Deut. 4:1-2)? _____

Did God want His people to live as they pleased or did He want them to PRACTICE His Word (Deuteronomy 4:5)? _____

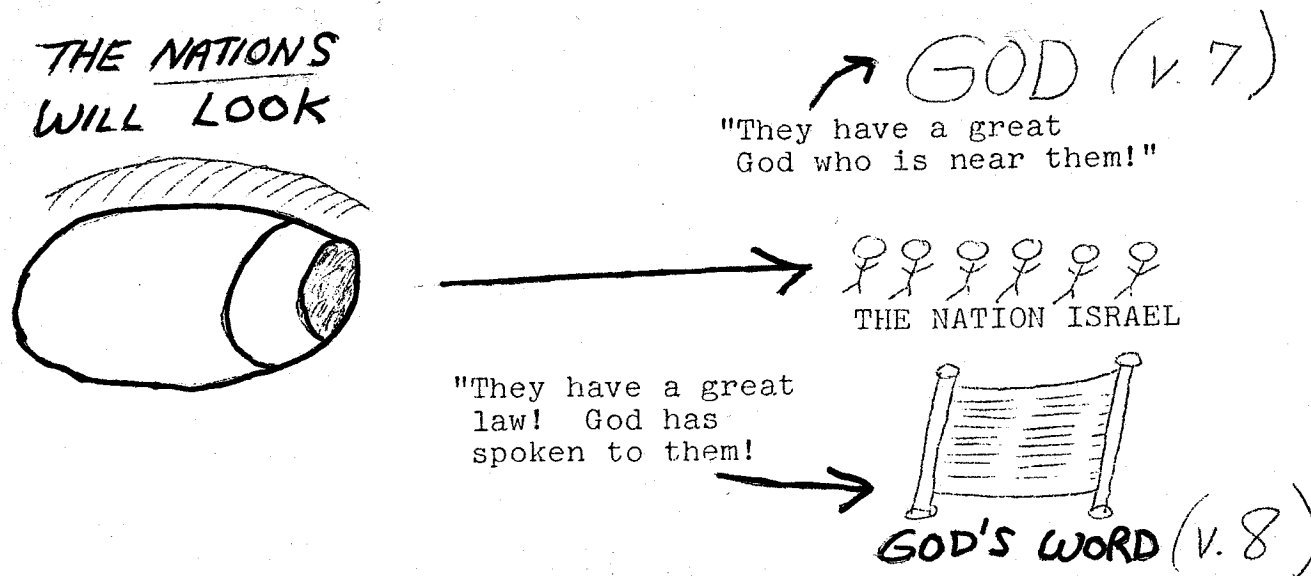
Why did God want them to do these things? Who was LOOKING AT and WATCHING the nation of Israel (Deut. 4:6)? _____

What will they say about the children of Israel (Deut. 4:6)? "Surely this _____ nation is a _____ and understanding people." Why will these nations think of Israel as such a **GREAT** nation (Deut. 4:7)? _____

They will see that these people have a real and right relationship with the living God! Do people see this about you?

What else did the nation Israel have that made it such a great nation and different from all of the other nations (Deut. 4:8)? _____

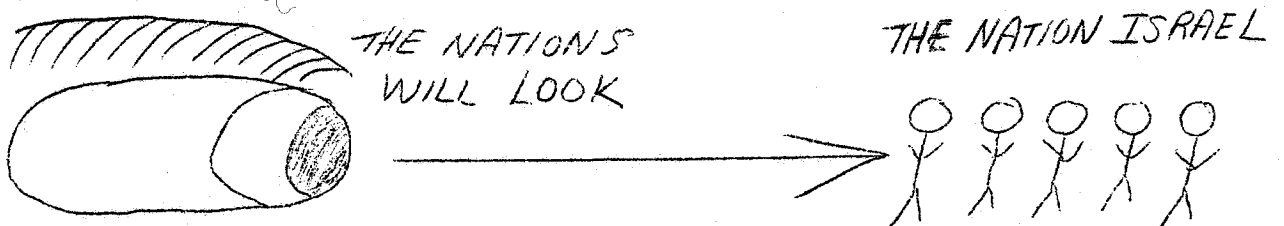
God had given His wonderful LAW (His Word) to the nation Israel:



The Need to be Different

The nation Israel had power as a WITNESS as long as they were different. They were different from the other nations because the LORD made them different. They had a relationship with God that the other nations did not have. They had the Word of God which the other nations did not have. They heard the voice of God (Deut. 4:33) which no other people had ever heard. God had worked for them POWERFULLY as He had not done for any other nation (Deut. 4:34)!

The great danger would be if Israel should forget the Lord and forget His Word (Deut. 4:23). If this were to happen, then they soon would begin to live and talk and behave like all the other nations. The peoples of the world would look at Israel and they would see no difference:



"They are just like us. They live like us and they worship gods like us. We have our gods and they have their gods."

Living not according to God's Word
(see Deut. 4:16-19,25)

The nation Israel needed to be DIFFERENT and only God could make such a DIFFERENCE. In Leviticus 20:24 the LORD said, "I am the _____ your God, which have _____ you from other people." God made a difference between the people of Israel and all other peoples, and God wanted this difference to be clearly seen and noticed. According to Leviticus 20:26, what kind of people did God want the children of Israel to be? _____

The same is true for believers today. Should believers be different than non-believers? How? Why? In what ways? What happens when saved people live just like unsaved people? If there is no difference between the saved and the unsaved, what would the unsaved people think about the God of the Christians (believers in Christ)? Would they think that He is a God who is so weak and powerless that He cannot even change the way a person lives? Compare 2 Corinthians 5:17.

God Makes Himself Known Through His Acts

In Old Testament times God often made Himself known through the mighty acts which He did. How did the LORD prove that He was the *only true God* to Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exodus 14:17-18, 26-27)? _____

Many years later the people of Jericho were still terrified because they had heard how the Lord _____ the water of the _____ Sea (Joshua 2:10).

Later God performed another mighty act. He dried up the waters of the Jordan River (during flood season) and allowed the children of Israel to cross. Why did God do this (Joshua 4:24)? _____

_____ When the other nations saw such a mighty act of God then they were forced to conclude that there must be a MIGHTY GOD who performed the mighty act!

As you think through the Old Testament, can you think of some other MIGHTY ACTS OF GOD which proved that the LORD was the true God? (think of the days of David, Daniel and Elijah, etc.)

The Glory of Solomon's Kingdom

God's blessing on the nation Israel was clearly seen in the early days of King Solomon's reign.

What did God give to Solomon (1 Kings 4:29)? _____

Were there any who were wiser than he (1 Kings 4:30-31)? _____ What else did God give to this king (1 Kings 3:13)? _____

Read 1 Kings 10:1-9. This queen came to visit Solomon from a far away country (from Africa). Solomon and the nation Israel had become famous the world around (verse 1)! Was this woman impressed by what she saw (verses 4-7)? _____ She could hardly believe it! Did she give all the credit to Solomon or did she give credit to Solomon's GREAT GOD (verse 9)? _____

_____ The King of Israel (Solomon) and the nation of Israel were pointing this Queen to the GOD OF ISRAEL! Jesus mentioned this important visit in Matthew 12:42—"she came from the _____ parts of the earth." In the days of Solomon God was very much concerned about the uttermost parts of the earth! Do you think that this queen went back and reported what she saw to many others? _____

God Has Compassion Even For the Heathen!

The book of Jonah shows us very clearly the heart of compassion that God has for ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE. Jonah was told to go to a heathen city and preach to heathen people (the Assyrians). Why did Jonah disobey the LORD (Jonah 4:2)? Jonah knew that God was a MERCIFUL and COMPASSIONATE God! Jonah knew that God's concern reached far past the borders of Israel, and Jonah felt that the wicked people of Nineveh deserved God's wrath, not God's mercy. He wanted them to have God's judgment, not God's kindness.

Read all ten verses In Jonah chapter 3. Did Jonah finally preach to these people as God had told him to do? _____ Did the people respond to his message? _____ Did they turn from their evil ways? _____ Most preachers would be very pleased by such a response. Was Jonah very happy about it (Jonah 4:1)? _____ Jonah did not share the heart of God for these people (compare Jonah 4:7-11). Jonah was more concerned for a plant than he was for 120,000 people.

Israel's Failure

Israel failed to be the kind of witness God wanted them to be. As the years passed the nation turned away from the LORD and from His Word. They became less and less different from the heathen peoples that lived around them. They pointed less and less to the God that they were supposed to represent. Finally, however, God sent the PERFECT JEW and the PERFECT WITNESS to this earth. In the next chapter we will study the Lord Jesus Christ--His Mission and His Message!

God does not want us to fail our mission. Is your life pointing to the ONLY TRUE GOD? Can others see a difference in the way you live and act and speak and think? Do you have a heart of concern and love that reaches out to ALL MEN and ALL PEOPLE?

SEE 1 KINGS 8:55-61

1 KINGS 8:60--"That all the people of the earth may _____ that the _____ is _____."

1 KINGS 8:61--"Let your heart therefore be _____ (doing anything and everything in a full and complete way, whole, whole-hearted) with the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes, and to keep His commandments." Do you have a heart devoted to God and His infallible Word?