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**GOD'S PLAN FOR
THE NATIONS:
HEALING
Part 2: The
Service of the
Prophets:
Isaiah**

God's ultimate purpose in the universe is the healing of the nations (Re 22:2). This is clearly seen by tracing God's interaction with the nations of the earth from Genesis to Revelation. I demonstrated this vital truth in the June 2000 issue of the *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology* by answering from the Scriptures four questions: 1) What are "the nations"? 2) Where did the nations originate? 3) Why do the nations need healing? 4) What is God's plan for healing the nations? Covering the period from Seth to Solomon, I demonstrated that God's plan to heal the nations began in Genesis 3:15 with the enigmatic promise to send an "offspring" of Eve to remedy the problem created by the original sin (NIV). To ensure that the knowledge of the Holy One would not be lost by the nations of the earth following their dispersion at Babel, God selected Abraham and his descendants to bear witness to *El*

Elyon, God Most High (Ge 14:18; Ps 47:2). I demonstrated from the writings of Moses (Ex 19:3-5; Dt 4:5-8) and David (Ps 22:25-28; 47:1-9; 67:1-7), and the history of Solomon (1Ki 4:29-34; 10:1-9), that while many Israelites understood the obligation of Israel to make the name of Yahweh known among the nations, they did not act to fulfill this obligation. In fact, Solomon led the way in denying the supremacy of Yahweh by erecting temples to Chemosh and Molech in Jerusalem. Israel turned to idolatry. The name of Yahweh was no longer praised among the nations, but blasphemed. Rather than declaring Yahweh to be *El Elyon*, Israel made his name equal to Molech and Chemosh. God's judgment was to remove the kingdom from Solomon's son. God's ultimate purpose was

that all nations would be healed through the ministry of Israel. This plan will be achieved when the Messiah establishes his Kingdom. This is clearly seen in the Book of Isaiah.

The missionary message of Isaiah is not a common theme for scholarly study or devotional discussion. Emphasis is consistently placed on the sin of Israel, and — especially in these days — on Isaiah's rebuke of the social injustice common in Israel during Isaiah's ministry. While social injustice and sin are worthy objects of attention, if the modern evangelical church is to fulfill its God-given mandate, we must see that God's ultimate concern with Israel was not their social injustice but their refusal to make God's "ways known on earth, and [God's] salvation [known] among all nations" (Ps 67:2 NIV). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to reveal the missionary message of Isaiah by a study of passages relating to "the nations" in Isaiah. The thesis is that Isaiah has a missionary message that furthers the ultimate purpose of God to heal all nations, and that the evangelical church ignores this message and purpose at its own peril. It is time for the evangelical church in the Caribbean to send its best personnel to the 10/40 Window so that those nations will be healed.

Isaiah: Introductory Comments

The authorship and date of the Book of Isaiah have been the focus of much debate. One view argues for at least two authors writing over a period of approximately 300 years. R.E. Clements writes, "All that is now contained in chapters 40ff. certainly dates from the sixth century BC and later," citing scholarly opinion dating to 1775 (2). George Gray argues: "But ancient as the theory that Isaiah is the author of all that is in the book that bears his name may be, it is certainly very erroneous" (xxx). He holds that the text was written by an eighth century prophet, a sixth century prophet and a redactor, or compiler, from a much later period (xxxi). R.B.Y. Scott agrees, claiming that a First Isaiah wrote chapters 1-39 in the eighth century, while chapters 40-66 were written in the sixth century by a Second Isaiah (151).

Evangelicals have consistently contended that one man named Isaiah wrote the entire text in the eighth century. Allan McRae does not discuss the issues of authorship or date in his work on Isaiah 40-56:8, but he attributes the entire section to the Isaiah who was a contemporary of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (19-20). Rawlinson provides an

extensive review of the two theories, citing scholars who argue for as many as seven contributors to the text, but acknowledges that the oldest and strongest evidence supports the unity of the text, and its authorship by a single eighth century prophet (ix-xxviii). Wolf gives an equally extensive analysis of the two theories and draws on new evidence that was not available to Rawlinson, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, but still advocates the single author view (27-38). Ronald Youngblood summarizes the strong evidence for the authorship of the text by a single eighth century prophet and concludes, "Although God himself is the ultimate Author of the Book of Isaiah, he caused its inspired words to be written down by one of his choicest servants. A man named Isaiah produced a book called Isaiah, and the latter bears the unmistakable imprint of the former's life and times" (10). I accept the evangelical view because it has strong scholastic support and agrees with the plain statements of Jesus Christ (Mt 13:14, 15:8-9; Mk 7:6-7; Lk 4:14-21).

Isaiah dates his work as occurring during the reigns of four Israelite kings. The dates and duration of the reign of these kings have been established as follows: 1) Uzziah (Azariah), B.C. 811-759, 52 years; 2) Jotham, B.C. 759-743, 16 years; 3) Ahaz, B.C. 743-727, 16 years; 4) Hezekiah, B.C. 727-698, 29 years (Rawlinson 2).

Isaiah's name means "the salvation of Jehovah" (Martin 17) or "the Lord saves" (Youngblood 20). Thus, Isaiah's theme may be expressed in various ways but its essence is "Salvation is of the Lord" (Martin, 16, Youngblood 20, Rawlinson i). The basic literary units of the text are:

1. Book of Immanuel, 1-12
2. Book of Oracles Against the Nations, 13-23
3. Book of Apocalyptic Oracles, 14-27
4. Book of Woes, 28-33
5. Book of Judgment and Restoration, 34-35
6. Book of Hezekiah, 36-39
7. Book of Consolation, 40-66
 - a) Doctrine of God, 40-48
 - b) Doctrine of Salvation, 49-57
 - c) Doctrine of the Last Days, 58-66 (Youngblood 18-19).

This study focuses only on the first twelve chapters, the Book of Immanuel, because of space limitations. In these chapters there are five passages where the nations are in view. A study of these passages demonstrates the missionary message of Isaiah.

Isaiah 1

Isaiah 1 presents the “arraignment” of Israel before the “bench” of God’s court on charges of corruption, rebellion and evil. The chapter serves as “an excellent summary of the entire book. The themes of idolatry, the sins of the rulers and the people, corruption in all areas of social life, and Jehovah’s responses—condemnation, judgment, and destruction as well as exhortation and the provision of redemption and salvation—recur throughout the great Book of Isaiah” (Hailey 44-45). It describes Israel as it existed at that time. Rather than be an object by which God could bring healing to the nations, Israel’s absolute rejection of God made them a barrier to the healing. Extensive charges are listed:

1. Rebellion, disobedience, v.2
2. Rejection of their creator, v.3
3. Rejection of the Holy One of Israel, v.4
4. Ritualism, v.13
5. Murder, v.15,22
6. Theft and bribery, v.23
7. Oppression of orphans and widows, v.23

The punishments were already visible, including sickness (v.5-6) and occupation (v.7-9). Rather than be an object by which God could bring healing to the nations, Israel’s absolute rejection of God made them a barrier to that healing. Punishment was meted out to persuade Israel to repent and fulfill its destiny as a the means of healing for the nations.

God’s purpose in giving Israel the land (cf. Ex 19:3-6; Dt 4:5-9) was not being fulfilled because of the sin of the people. God’s warning was intended to call them back to obedience to his laws so the nations would again come to Jerusalem to hear of the glory of Yahweh. Youngblood asserts that “Isaiah’s mission was to warn the people that God, the ‘Judge of all the earth’ (Ge 18:25), would sentence them to destruction unless they turned from sin and to him” (35). The sin of Israel also prevented the

nations from hearing of Yahweh, making it impossible for them to turn "from sin and to him".

The final paragraph, vv. 24-31, establishes that God would punish Israel for their sins. The punishment would purge Israel, resulting in the formation of "a new spiritual Israel" that would perform the task of proclaiming salvation to all nations (Hailey 43-44). With the general themes established, Isaiah begins to demonstrate the impact the cleansing and restoration of Israel will have on the purpose of God for all nations.

Isaiah 2:1-5

Isaiah 2 contrasts the sinful condition of Israel with what God intended for Israel to be so that the nations could be healed. As Oswalt writes, "... ch. 1 introduced the reader to the book as a whole, and chapters 2-4 laid bare the enormous conflict between what Israel was called to be and what, in fact, she was" (150). This passage, which appears in almost identical words in Micah 4:1-4, predicted that the nations would stream to Israel to worship God, to learn his ways, and to enjoy the benefits of his laws and judgments. This would result in the end of the violence unleashed on the earth by evil men.

The key question is, "When would this occur?" The only time frame mentioned by Isaiah is the indefinite term, "In the last days" (2:2). Wolf asserts that in the New Testament "the last days began with the first coming of Christ," based on Acts 2:17 and Hebrews 1:2, but then contradicts himself by claiming that this passage refers only to the second coming of the Messiah and the millennium (77). Youngblood (36) and Leupold (75) also limit the last days to the millennium. However, when this passage is seen in light of God's eternal purpose that the nations be healed, it is clear that the "last days" point not to the millennium but to the Church Age. Arguing that "Isaiah's primary theme is to show God's vision for His world through the house of the Lord located on Mount Zion," McKenna points to a time when the nations will stream into His kingdom, recognizing Christianity as "chief among all religions of the world" (71). This is clearly a Church Age event for the streaming into the Kingdom of God, represented by the Holy City, has been going on since the time of St. Paul.

Hailey takes a similar approach (45-48). He concludes that "the latter days spoken of by Isaiah are to be understood as that period in which God

would make known His law through Jesus Christ and send it forth from Jerusalem and from Zion. Isaiah was speaking of that which began on Pentecost and continues until now” (46). He establishes this by three lines of argument. First, Daniel used the term “latter days” to refer to events that would occur during the time of the Roman Empire’s dominion over Jerusalem (Dan 2:28). Second, Peter had the same opinion when he quoted Joel 2:28 in Acts 2:17. Third, Peter again referred to his own time as “the last days” in Act 3:24.

Oswalt concurs with this view, writing:

... it cannot be said that this passage can only refer to the millennial age. In a more proximate sense it can relate to the Church age when the nations stream to Zion to learn the ways of her God through his incarnation in Christ. . . . It is in this light that one must view the promise of the eminency of the temple mount. . . . Many of the ancient religions depicted their gods as dwelling on a high mountain (Olympus for the Greeks or Cassius for the Phoenicians). What Isaiah was asserting was that one day it would become clear that the religion of Israel was *the* religion; that her God was *the* God. To say that his mountain would become the highest of all was a way of making that assertion in a figure which would be intelligible to people of that time (116-117).

Therefore, this passage is speaking about the worldwide proclamation of the gospel during the Church Age. God’s intention in cleansing Israel is to make it possible for the nations to hear the message of salvation and be healed. Oswalt writes:

... the import of the section [i.e. chapters. 2-4] is that the Israel of 2:6-4:1 can only fulfill the destiny given her in 2:2-4 by experiencing the judgment expressed throughout 2:6-4:1 and the purification described in 4:2-6. This schema would correspond well with the thought of ch. 1 and indeed the whole book: proud, self-sufficient Israel can become the witness to the greatness of God only when she has been reduced to helplessness by his just judgment and then restored to life by his unmerited grace” (113).

The witness to the greatness of God is given to the nations so the nations will be healed. Underlying Isaiah's message of judgment for sin and restoration after repentance is God's ultimate purpose that Israel proclaim his greatness to the nations of the earth so that the nations might be healed. This is the missionary message of Isaiah.

Isaiah 5, The Song of the Vineyard

Isaiah adopts the literary device of a poem, or song, that serves as an analogy for a great spiritual truth. The missionary message of the passage is brought to prominence by the assertion in v. 26 that the "distant nations" will be used by God to punish God's people — which demonstrates God's universal concern for all nations and the reality that not all Israelites are people of God. It is the spiritual Israel who will fulfill God's purposes in Israel.

Isaiah writes that a man planted a vineyard at an ideal location, "a fertile hillside" (5:1). He cleared it, cultivated it and planted it with the best possible vines. He nurtured it, fertilized it, provided it with all possible care. He built a watchtower, so as to protect it from marauding bands, wild animals, stray cattle, or anything else that would harm it, or prevent a good harvest. He had every expectation of a good crop, so he built a winepress where he could process the crop.

However, in spite of all his efforts, he received from it only "bad fruit" (5:2), sour grapes! Oswalt explains that the Hebrew literally means "stinking things," noting that the Vulgate used *labruscas*, which he translates as "wild grapes," and that the LXX translated it as "thorns (150, fnt. 4). He himself translates it as "wild grapes" (150). Leupold rejects the translation as "wild grapes" because such grapes can "be sweet and produce a very good wine." He recommends the term "stinking grapes" (110). McKenna translates it as "wild grapes" but in his commentary explains, "The vineyard yields only rotten grapes whose stench repels the owner (93). His decision was, therefore, to destroy it completely, 5:5-6. It is not merely abandoned, but it is actively destroyed by the removal of its protection (the wall or hedge) and the prevention of rain (vv. 5-6). It will be open to trampling by marauders and grow only thorns and briars.

God applied the analogy to Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham; they were the vineyard of Yahweh. God chose the descendants of Abraham to be a blessing to all nations by preserving and proclaiming

the knowledge of Yahweh on the earth. Israel, however, refused to obey the law of the Lord. Jerusalem was the scene of endless bloodshed, not justice (5:7). Violence was the law of the land. Justice came at the point of a sword, or the tip of a spear!! Instead of Righteousness, the city was filled with the cries of the distressed (5:7). Note the paronomasia in the Hebrew of verse 7. God hoped for "justice" (Heb. *mishpat*) but got only "bloodshed" (Heb. *mispah*). God wanted "righteousness" (Heb. *sedekah*) but got only "cries [Heb. *seakah*] of distress" (Hailey 64). They gathered up all the land until there was nowhere for the common people to live. This was a violation of the law of jubilee (5:8, compare Le 25:8-54). The land was to revert to the original family owners every fifty years. Israel devised ways to avoid this, and great land-owning families developed. The poor were unable to buy back their land. The rich indulged in drunkenness and gluttony, abusing their servants and blaspheming God as did Nebuchadnezzar when the hand of God wrote his doom on the wall (5:11-12, cf. Dan 5:22-29). They challenged God to stop their deceit and wickedness (5:18-19). They perverted right and wrong, saying the exact opposite of what God had decreed (5:20). Pride (5:21) and bribery (5:22) were common.

Hailey well summarizes the six woes that represent God's Grapes of Wrath:

With the pronouncement of six vivid and harsh descriptions, the prophet sets forth the features of a corrupt civilization. Modern nations that have reached a high degree of so-called civilization can read this chapter and see their own image reflected. Greed and avarice as well as alcoholism and sensuous entertainments characterize a people so laden with iniquity that they can no longer discern between good and evil (65).

What is the meaning of the analogy? Oswalt draws together five different applications, that fail to see its missionary intent. First, "true religion is divine culture in human history." Second, "election is intended to produce righteousness." Third, divine husbandry may be thwarted by an inner degeneracy." Fourth, "judgment, that is, withdrawal of God's protection and gracious influence, is the inevitable result of sin." Fifth, "sin is not merely failure to rise to the best, it is the perversion of the good" (155).

Hailey concludes that the analogy teaches that Israel's sin would bring judgment on the nation. While the people would not repent, a purified remnant would emerge. Yet, he makes no allusion to the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose of healing the nations (73).

Leupold limits application of the passage to the evil of Israel in rejecting God's law (115). Similarly, Wolf sees only the "gloomy" outlook for Israel because of their sin (85).

Otto Kaiser sees the meaning as "so obvious that lengthy exposition is superfluous." Yet, he limits the meaning to Israel's failure to respond to God's righteous demands as requiring God's judgment on his people (62).

McKenna does see the redemptive purposes of God in his dealings with Israel, but like the other commentators, he does not recognize the importance of the nations in God's redemptive purpose or in God's message to Israel via Isaiah (102-103).

The missionary intent is clearly seen when God's supreme purpose for the healing of the nations is emphasized. Commenting on v. 13, Oswalt sees a lack of knowledge of the overall purpose of God as part of the cause of the exile. "Dillman comments that God's work, which the people do not understand (vv. 12,13), is the accomplishment of salvation through human history. . . . and it is probably true that most people lacked any overarching view of God's purposes" (160-161).

In the same way most modern commentators fail to see that Israel's sin caused the nations to blaspheme (i.e. to treat as common) the name of God. Israelite behavior made Yahweh look just like the regionally worshipped tribal deities—not the supreme ruler of the universe. The glory of God was hidden from the nations by Israel's sin. Therefore, God would use the nations of the earth to destroy Israel, the vineyard of God's own planting, 5:24-30. The nations who were to be the recipients of God's grace through Israel, became the whips of God to purify Israel so the nations could see the glory of God, call upon their Creator and be healed, 5:26. This is the clear meaning of the text, a meaning so clear that "lengthy exposition is superfluous," but which Otto Kaiser — like many modern evangelicals — failed to see (62).

Isaiah 9:1-7

Isaiah 9:1-7 contains the next mention of "the nations" in Isaiah. The terms used (9:1) are variously translated but come from the same original

words. The Hebrew is *goyim*, which was the common word used by the Israelites for all non-Jewish people groups of the world, occurring 346 times in the Old Testament. The Septuagint translates *goyim* with τῶν ἐθνῶν the common New Testament word (occurring 61 times) for people groups of the Roman world. The King James Version renders the phrase as “Galilee of the Nations,” while the New American Standard and the New International Versions translate the phrase as “Galilee of the Gentiles.”

Gloom came on Isaiah and his message throughout chapters 6-8, alleviated only by the promise of the sign of Immanuel (ch. 7). Gloom overcomes Israel, especially Galilee, because the nations will become the rod of Yahweh to punish Israel for its sin; but the gloom will be lifted when the nations receive a great blessing from God. In the darkness and gloom of the judgment of God, a great light will break forth in “Galilee of the Nations.” The great light is a child born to rule, who will establish the Kingdom of God with peace, justice and righteousness for all nations—Jew and Gentile. Two questions arise: Why Galilee, and why is it characterized as “of the Gentiles” or “of the Nations”?

Galilee was the one place in Israel where the Jews and Gentiles lived together with some degree of harmony and respect. Oswalt lists its inhabitants as including “Hebrews, Canaanites, Arameans, Hittites, and Mesopotamians” (239). Later history witnessed the arrival of the Greeks and Romans. With the major trade routes between Asia and Egypt passing through the region, undoubtedly other ethnic groups had contact with Galilee.

Wolf notes that the region was the first to suffer under the Assyrian invasions of Tiglath-Pileser III in 735 and 732 B.C. (though most other commentators place the campaigns in 734 and 732 B.C., see Kaiser 1972, 125; Leupold 180; Youngblood 51; Hailey 99). He comments that “these tribal areas were always susceptible to foreign influence,” and were even bartered to Tyre for timber and gold for Solomon’s Temple (96).

The commentators emphasize that the reason for the Light shining in Galilee of the Nations is that Galilee suffered most under the onslaught of the Assyrians. None consider the idea that in this region the Jews and Gentiles were all able to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. They completely ignore the fact that God sent the Messiah for all nations, not just for the Jews. In this place, according to Isaiah, God would do a great thing, in

accordance with his “ultimate purpose” in human history (Oswalt 241)! The Nations and the Jews will both hear the gospel and be united as one people of God. Isaiah demonstrates this in the verse 3.

A significant change occurs in verse 3. In 9:1-2 The Light shines among “the nations” (Gentiles). In v. 3, “the nations” become “the nation.” The “nations” (pl.) are the focus in 9:1. These “nations” (pl.) receive the blessing of the Shining Light in 9:2. This leads Isaiah to explain that “the nation” (sing.) is expanded.

What “nation” (sing.) is expanded? **It is the nation, or Kingdom, of God! It is spiritual Israel, not the physical descendants of Abraham.** It rejoices at the work of God, 9:3. It receives a child, a son to rule over it, 9:6. Its king is given wonderful names and titles, 9:6. Its king will rule eternally! It will be David’s kingdom and its king will sit on David’s throne, 9:7. Its king will rule with absolute justice, righteousness and peace (9:7). This nation is “the called out ones” from “the nations” that inhabit Galilee. The nations who lived in Galilee saw a great light and rejoiced at its appearance. They experienced the blessings of its reign. This is the Church! God’s people called out of every nation on earth to serve him and to experience the blessings of his reign. This is the healing of the nations! This is God’s plan for the nations—that they would be healed by entering into the blessings of *the* nation! The Lord himself would accomplish this, 9:7.

The commentators fail to see this because they do not understand God’s ultimate purpose is the healing of the nations, not merely the salvation of Israel, or the church. Wolf actually argues that God will send the Light to Galilee because of his love for “His people,” which he limits to Israel (98). Oswalt limits the blessings of the Light to Israel (239-243). Leupold sees that the Light is for all nations, but then limits “the nation” (9:3) to Israel. He fails to see that the expansion of “the nation” means that the “nations” are included in the people of God, in fulfillment of God’s ultimate missionary purpose (182-183). McKenna recognizes that the nations will be included, will share in the Light, but fails to notice both the eternal purpose of God in this act, and the responsibility of Israel to proclaim good news to the Gentiles who share in the vision of Light (140). Hailey comes closest to seeing God’s eternal purpose in this revelation. He notes that the nation is enlarged not by the subjection of the Gentiles, but by their inclusion, their incorporation into the People of God. When the nations

stream into Zion (Isa 2:2), they become part of the Kingdom (100). God is not willing that any should perish, and has included all in his ultimate plan. When we fail to see the healing of the nations as God's ultimate purpose, we are like Israel, claiming the blessings of the "elect" for our own exclusive use.

Israel's refusal to include the nations in the blessings of salvation was part of the cause of the Lord's anger as revealed in 9:8-10:4. Israel was to be the means of this blessing, but their sin caused God to destroy (or purify) them. Just as the vineyard was destroyed because it produced "stinking things" instead of sweet, aromatic grapes that could be made into the finest of wines, even so Israel was destroyed because it refused to produce works of righteousness. God's message was "against Jacob" and would "fall on Israel" (9:8). In spite of Israel's proud plans of rebuilding whatever God tore down, God would use the Arameans, Philistines, and Assyrians to destroy the northern kingdom totally. Judgment came on these people because they absolutely refused to obey God's laws and to complete God's assigned task!

Isaiah 11:1-12:6

The last occurrences of the term "the nations" in the Book of Immanuel are 11:10,12 and 12:4. The context is that the Lord will punish His people for refusing to do His will, Isa 9:8-10:34. After the punishment is completed, "the nation" will be restored to God's favor. These verses are treated together because they deal with a single event, the appearance of the Root of Jesse (11:10).

The thrust of the verses is that the Gentiles, the nations of the earth, will rally to the Root, or Branch, of Jesse. Isaiah explains that the root of Jesse will rule over his people with "justice for the poor" and "righteousness for the needy" (11:4). Peace will be established between nations and individuals, as well as between the natural enemies of the animal kingdom, or between children and dangerous animals. When this happens, "the peoples" and "the nations" will rally to God's anointed, the Messiah. The "remnant" of Israel will combine with "the nations" into one Davidic Kingdom of God on earth, a new nation of God's elect from every ethnic group on earth, 11:11-12. This new nation will vanquish all its foes, 11:13-15.

Once again, these “called out ones,” those who rallied to Christ (11:10-12), are the Church! This is the healing of the nations! The promise of Rev. 22:3 is partially fulfilled in the Church Age, and completely fulfilled in the Millennial Age. When the “called out” people stream to Jerusalem, there will be a great highway from Assyria to Jerusalem because so many people will want to hear the laws of God and learn to worship his King, the Messiah. This began to happen under the reign of Solomon (1Ki 4:24, 10:1), but it died away when Solomon turned from the worship of Yahweh to the worship of idols and false gods. But in the last days, when Messiah reigns on earth at Jerusalem, the people of God will praise him for his salvation, and the end of evil on earth, Isa 12:1-3. At that time, Israel, the united people of God who have been called out of every nation on earth (Isa 9:3), will preach the gospel, the marvelous works of God, among the nations (12:4). They will cry out for the glory of God to “be known to all nations” (12:5).

Conclusion

God’s ultimate purpose is the healing of the nations. He began this work in Genesis 3:15, continued it though the antediluvian period, the Babel event and scattering of the nations of the earth. He furthered it through the call of Abraham and the people of Israel. A mini-fulfillment of his purpose was achieved under Solomon, but sin and idolatry forced God to act to purify his people. Isaiah was one of the prophets sent to explain to the people of God what God was doing, and what they needed to do to please him. Isaiah 5:9 indicates that economic hardships, poverty and want come upon the people of God who refuse to perform their assigned task. The sinful behavior of God’s people causes His blessing to turn to punishment! Isaiah 9:1-3 demonstrates that the refusal to perform the assigned task causes God to transfer his blessings to others who will fulfill his purposes. The nations were united into one nation at Pentecost, when the “dividing wall of hostility” was destroyed (Ep 2:14).

This has a significant application to the modern evangelical church in the Caribbean. With one third of the world’s population beyond the reach of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God’s people still have much to do to fulfill their mandate. The gospel must be proclaimed to the unreached nations of the earth, the *goyim* or *τα εθνη*, before they can stream into the elevated “mountain of the Lord’s temple (Is 2:2). Many of the unreached peoples of

the earth are in regions where Caribbean believers can gain access which is denied to missionaries from North America and Europe. It is time for the modern Caribbean evangelical church to act aggressively to fulfill its mandate. If it fails, or refuses to do so, the blessings of God may turn to punishment.



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