

## Part 5: Israel's mission

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Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[ 0 : 00 ] Now, there are many readings that we're going to go through this evening. I would like to read them all to you. They're short, but they are a selection throughout, mainly the Old Testament one out of the New.

So we're on part five, and this is Israel's mission. I don't know if you remember in the book. So we've, part four was the covenant promises. And I use the illustration, and it's probably apt if I use it again, that if I stand here and say, men are just great, okay?

You shouldn't object to what I'm not saying, which can often be the temptation. But what about women? Well, I wasn't speaking about women. I was just saying that men are great, you know? But when your mind goes to object to something that's not been said, what normally happens is that you don't consider what has been said. And this is pretty important when you think covenantally. Well, Israel are God's covenant people. And so the passages that I'm going to be reading out are those key covenantal mission parts that Israel were given.

[ 1 : 08 ] So the first one is in Deuteronomy chapter 10 and verses 12 to 13. So Deuteronomy 10, chapter 10, beginning at verse 12 and 13.

If you'd like to turn to Isaiah.

Isaiah 42 and 49, 42 first. This is Isaiah 42, verses 6 through to 9.

Again, hear God's word. It says, I am the Lord. I have called you in righteousness. I will take you by the hand and keep you. I will give you as a covenant to the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

I am the Lord, that is my name. My glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. Behold, the former things have come to pass.

[ 3 : 01 ] And new things I now declare before they spring forth. I tell them to you. Isaiah 49, verse 6. God says, God says, it is too light of a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel.

I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. And then John chapter 8, verse 12.

And this you'll know even if you've not made your way there. You'll know at least when I read it. This is Jesus speaking, John 8, 12. Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Well, may God bless his word to us this evening. We'll come back to that in message form after this next hymn. So we are on part five of our studies in the original mission.

[ 4 : 38 ] Having covered God's covenant promises last time, this time we cover the mission given to Israel. And the basic idea here, something that we know well as a church, is that God involves his people in his plans.

God has a mission, and then God chooses a people, Israel, that he involves in that mission. They have a particular role that they can fulfill, but they cannot fulfill what Christ can only accomplish. So they have their part, which they can do, and they ought to do faithfully, but they cannot do the part that belongs to Jesus, which is accomplish salvation, that that compassion and salvation would go out to the end of the world and save.

Now, just like Israel, the church has been given the same type of mission, and that we've received the great commission. So we, like Israel, can see the parallel that we have with each other.

We have both been involved in the mission of God by God's command to do something. And what we do is we proclaim the gospel, which points back to the Messiah, and the nation of Israel were a light unto the nations that pointed forward to the Messiah.

[ 6 : 05 ] So whether you are before or after, your mission is simply to reflect the Lord Jesus Christ who is to come or has come. So Israel is to be a light unto the nations.

We're told to go and make disciples of all nations. And the way that that happens is by directing those nations to the Lord Jesus Christ, to what God has done in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the simple point, which is a fairly easy one to follow, is that God's mission involves God's people in that mission. God has plans and purposes, and part of those plans and purposes is to use his people to fulfill his plans and purposes.

So as we consider Israel's power in God's mission, we ought to automatically be able to reflect on our own part today.

Okay? As we look at Israel's calling, we ought to be able to reflect on our own calling. As we look at Israel being commanded by God, we ought to reflect back on the Great Commission where we have been commanded by God to go out into all the nations.

[ 7 : 20 ] Now, the connection here, which is a fairly simple one, is that Israel are called to be a light unto the nations. They are to, that's what they have been given to do.

Until, of course, or as well as, but Jesus is the light in John 8. I am the light of the world, Jesus says. But then Jesus, in Matthew 5, then calls those who belong to him lights of the world.

So, in three cases, you have this word light used. The word light is what connects these three groups together. You have Israel, you have Jesus, and you have the people of Jesus.

You have the church. And they're all described as being a light to the world. Now, they're all lights in different ways. Israel preceded the church in being a light to the nations.

But Jesus says, no, the church now, my people, you are to be a light out into the world. You know, on a hill, don't be hidden. But Jesus is the light himself.

[ 8 : 28 ] He is the one from where the light actually comes. Now, when we consider a word like that, we're talking about something, but now we have to define what it is.

It's not enough simply to say that Jesus is the light of the world without saying what that light is. It's not enough to say that Israel is called to be a light unto the nations without knowing what that light involves.

What does it mean to be a light to the nations? And it's not enough for you to sit here and to know that God calls you through the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son, you know, God is calling you the light of the world.

You have to know what that light means in order to be that light in the world. So one of the things that it means throughout the Old Testament, light, is that it is a revelation.

In the New Testament, in 1 John chapter 1, we're told that God is light. So if you were to put these two together, that if light is a means of revelation in the Old Testament and 1 John 1, we're told that God is light, then it's the revelation of God to the nations.

[ 9 : 42 ] Okay? You hold these verses together and it's quite clear that that light represents God revealing himself to men and women, boys and girls throughout the generations.

Okay? And in God, there is no darkness at all. Okay? God is being revealed through his people. In 1 John 1, it says that if you have fellowship with God, then you walk in that light.

You have no light of your own, but you're able to enjoy that light, reflect that light out, by being in fellowship with the one who is light.

This is a bit like coming out of the shadows into a room filled with light. You experience the light by being in fellowship with that area, that you're in that location.

And this is what 1 John 1 is saying, that you who once walked in the darkness get to enjoy the light by virtue of you being in fellowship and communion with God.

[ 10 : 43 ] You have been brought into the light. And it goes on to say, and so the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from all unrighteousness. So this light is a purifying light.

It allows us to see that this does something, not just reveals, but actually accomplishes something. So when Israel are given this command to be a light to the nations, their simple role is to reveal God to a people who don't see.

They live in darkness. They live in a spiritual darkness. They live in a knowledge of darkness in that they do not know God. And that light is simply a word to describe them, their responsibility to reveal God to the people of the other nations.

But Israel, like us, don't have any light of their own. They only have the light given to them by God. It's that revelation. So what we begin to see is that only when the Lord Jesus Christ comes that he,

and he alone can say, I am the light.

Okay? I'm that light. So Israel have been a light to the nations, revealing God, and then when God turns up, he says, I am the light.

[12:06] I'm that revelation. I'm that everyone that pointed towards me. I'm that person. person. And so Christians today, called by Jesus to be lights to the world, by virtue of their relationship with God, share light as well.

We have no light of our own. Okay? It's only by belonging to Jesus do we get to enjoy fellowship with God, do we get to enjoy the truth that our sins are forgiven, and do we get to enjoy the assurance that they are forgiven by God who can cleanse us from sin properly.

Now, why is this necessary to know? Well, because, like all light, it has to go into a dark place.

Okay? Light is effective, not in a room filled with light.

Okay? You can add more candles, and of course, you can create more light. Okay? But we all know the power of a little light in a dark area, and that's the purpose of light here.

When God calls you the light, he knows that he's sending you out into darkness. When God calls the nation of Israel light to the nations, he's not saying that there's any light out there.

[13:28] He's saying, you're the light, and go illuminate, go draw attention to me. And so, the mission's difficult. The mission's difficult because it's dark out there, and we're afraid of the darkness often.

Okay? We're the light of the world, and yet we're afraid of the darkness because the darkness is a sinful darkness. It is a spiritual darkness. It is a place where you can get hurt out there.

You can get persecuted out there. You can die for Jesus out there. The darkness isn't a place that's safe to go, but it is the very place that God is sending his people.

Out you go. You're the light, and I want you to go out into that darkness. And so, you know, there's probably all of us at one stage were afraid of the dark, walking home through an area that you've never been before, and suddenly it's, you know, you timed your walk wrong, and suddenly it's pitch black, and you're still 30 minutes away from where you live, and suddenly you didn't realize you could run quite so fast.

You know, and you get, that's about the only time I ever run, might I add. Perhaps I should take up running in the dark. I might get somewhere. But that, that there is, is just, just an illustration of the truth that darkness has dangers.

[14:54] But that is where you're called to go. The light, however, is not like the light in this room. If you imagine a blind man walking through this whole day in, in the pitch black outside, okay, it's pitch black, let's say there's no street lights, and he walks into this room filled with light, the light makes no difference to him because he's blind.

There's just no difference made. And so, the light that we're speaking about here cannot be compared to a physical light because the light of the world is what transforms that spiritual blindness into sight.

In some cases, Jesus heals blind, blind Bartimaeus, okay, he makes him see. But in spiritually speaking, the light that we have is able to make a difference to those who are spiritually blind, unlike normal light making no difference to physically blind people in this world.

The light that we have actually changes is the person who receives that light. It actually illuminates, it actually reveals, it actually takes the scales away from the eyes because it is God's light.

Okay, it's what God does. Now, since God has given this mission to Israel to be a light in the darkness out there where it is scary, just like the church has been given the great commission to be light in the darkness, we have to understand that what's the best place to hide your light?

[16:36] Well, in a room filled of light. Okay? Light's never hid in the darkness because you always see it. You always see it. But the best place to hide your light as a Christian is go to church.

Okay? Let's just go to church. Pray, read your Bible, right? Because we're all light. Okay? Spiritually speaking, we all know that when, but the place where your light is hidden from the world is here.

The place where it's seen is out there. And this is what Jesus is calling his nation Israel to be and what the church has been called to do. You're a light to the nations.

It's not enough for me just to say the nation of Israel, God is saying in Isaiah. Okay, it's not enough. Okay, that's a good work, but I want my salvation to go to the end of the world.

And you have to get out there and make sure it gets there. That's how far I want it to go. And now, all of these promises are only ultimately kept in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 17 : 45 ] And so, here's a few considerations, important considerations to consider when thinking about the nation of Israel and even thinking about the church.

And this is where we have to remember the covenantal side, not this individual side of, well, we never know how things are going to turn out. We'll just hope for the best.

One of the things you learn through the book of Deuteronomy is God saying, I want my light to go out to all the nations, but he says it to one generation. And so, what happens when the children of that generation are not shown light by their parents?

Okay, there's a lot of years before Jesus turns up. There's several hundreds, thousands of years before the Lord Jesus Christ turns up. And in Deuteronomy, we learn that God has given this light to his people.

And the first thing that they should have clocked on to is, well, if this is going to make it into the next generation of Israelites, we have to tell the next generation. We have to make sure that our children receive the light that God has given to us.

[ 18 : 56 ] The faithfulness of that parental responsibility in order to be a light to the nations for the years to come is to be first a light in the home.

Okay? If we want to see the light in the nations in a hundred years' time, it's not enough just to go out into the world, but we have to start right where we are in the home.

Children are born into darkness, a spiritual darkness, and they need the light. Children are God's natural given mission field. And so, that's where your light begins.

That is, they're born into light in many ways, which is a privileged position. Of course, as long as you're not hiding your light in the home from them.

And so, parents have this responsibility of thinking, well, if this is something that has to happen for years to come, then my responsibility is to make sure that my children see the light.

[ 19 : 57 ] Okay? Now, of course, only God can save, but the responsibility lies with the parents in order for this to happen. And what does this mean, I think, for the Christian church?

Well, I've spoken at length on this through Branch Hub. I'm not intending to go into it now, but I'll just lay out the sort of, the foundation of it if I can.

Many Christian parents believe that you can overdo the gospel with your children. That you can just do too much. That you can just overdo church.

And that children need a limited diet of church. And they need a limited diet of the gospel. You need to, you need to strip it back. Don't be, don't be too, you know, overboard with it.

So just give them a very simple diet. But Proverbs teaches us, you are what you eat. Okay? You are what you eat. And that applies to spiritual food as much as it applies to physical food.

[ 21 : 02 ] Okay? If you strip back the spiritual food, then you're going to produce what, what limited spiritual food can produce. And this is one of the things that we begin to learn.

So Deuteronomy has this command given by God to the parents. How are we to shine our light to children? How are we supposed to do it?

Well, this is what he says. You are to teach your children diligently. When am I to do that? Well, when you're sitting together, when you're standing together, when you're walking together, at bedtime, in the morning, over breakfast, you're even to bind them to your children, write them on the doorpost, and even on the front gate.

Now, many Christians will have us overdoing it. So don't object to what I'm not saying, but rather, can you at least agree to what God has said?

Okay? Don't object to what's not being said. Rather, can you at least agree to what is being said?

Now, why is this so crucial? Well, the moment you substitute God's way for your way, you produce your results, not God's.

[ 22 : 15 ] Okay? The moment you substitute God's way for your way, you produce your results, not God's. Hence, why the Israel did not see many of the promises that God made, but they did not see them because they substituted God's way for their own.

And that's, that's a, that's a crucial point to remember. The proverb says this, that the tender mercies of the wicked are evil.

The tender mercies of the wicked are evil. We, we can go easy on people, right? So, we don't make them feel, we don't want them to feel bad. We don't want them to, okay, we don't want them to feel any kind of conviction, okay?

The tender mercies of the wicked are evil. What, the reason they're evil is because it doesn't have the other person's best interest at heart. You're going easy on them, but you're substituting God's way of disciplining, of correcting, for your own way, and then when you don't get the result the Bible says you should have, you're scratching your head because you can't figure out why that's happened.

Okay, to put it, I, apparently I heard, I don't know if this is true, but Scotland has banned smacking. Okay, now what am I to do about this?

[ 23 : 36 ] If it is the case that Proverbs teaches me that the rod of discipline drives foolishness from the heart of a child and I remove that rod of discipline, I'm encouraging the foolishness to remain in my child's heart.

Do you understand? Okay, if I substitute God's way for another way, let's say, let's have a conversation, I'm actually encouraging the foolishness to remain in the heart of the child. We can't afford to make the same mistakes that Israel made. That is, substituting God's way for our own and then scratching our head, wondering why we don't see the same results that God has promised.

Any kind substitution of a command given by God will not produce the promises that God has made. And so, this has led many believers to go, well, perhaps the promises are conditional, perhaps the promises are more like principles, perhaps Proverbs are more like principles rather than promises, you know, and that kind of interpretation is a bit like saying, well, God expects me to keep my word, but he doesn't have to keep his own.

Do you really believe that God doesn't have to keep his own word? The whole point of a covenant understanding is to understand God has to keep his word. So, those of us who are Christian parents and have children, you need to realize that God has made promises to you and to your children and you need to pray to God.

[ 25 : 11 ] I'm waiting for you to keep them. I've done my part. Now, please, Lord, I throw myself onto you, onto your mercy, so that you would keep, and this is just something you ought to do all the time.

There's nothing embarrassing about it, nothing embarrassing to look down on your children and realize that you can't give them what they need. Okay, it's humbling, but there's nothing embarrassing to throw yourself on God and say, I can't do it.

I just can't do it. Everything that they need, I can actually give them. And so, here I am doing my part, but, right? And this is where Israel failed to be.

And so, forgetfulness was considered to be as an unconscious action that they were not allowed to be disciplined for. A bit like a child saying, you can't tell me off because I forgot.

forgetfulness is not an excuse for not being told off. Okay? When the command is for you to remember, okay, forgetfulness is simply your way of saying, I've not kept that command, but you can't tell me off.

[ 26 : 22 ] Okay? Forgetfulness is not keeping the command. Okay? It's not an absence of mind for which you cannot be disciplined for. It is a breaking of the command, and the command is you ought to remember.

And that's what Israel failed to do. They were brilliant at making excuses, I forgot. But that I forgot was simply another way of saying, I did not remember. I did not keep the command to remember. And so, the issue at hand is that Israel could no longer be the light that they were called to be. They could no longer be the light and the blessing that they were meant to be, to anybody.

They just couldn't do their part. But they could do it, they just didn't do it. And so, we move on to where there is a way, there is a will.

You look at me thinking, no, you've got that the wrong way around. No, I really haven't. Where there is a way, there is a will. And the reason it has to be that way around is because Jesus said, I am the way.

[ 27 : 30 ] way. We already have the way. God's way is laid out through the whole of scripture. God is saying, I am the way. This is the way that I want you to walk in.

And what follows this is a test to see whether or not you will. Okay, God has a way. Now he's testing whether or not you will. Now when we use the phrase, where there is a will, there is a way, what we're actually saying, as you well know, is that when a person is absolutely determined to make something happen, they'll find a way of doing it.

When they have the desire to do it and the determination to do it, when they have that kind of a will, they will most definitely find a way, they'll make it happen. But what God does is he reverses it and he says, well I've provided the way, now let's see if you've got the will.

I'm providing the way for you to walk in, but my way is a real challenge to your will. Will you go this way? Will you walk in it?

Will you do it my way or will you do it your own? So where there is a way, there is a testing of the will. God is saying, I am the way, Jesus said, I am the way, he knows it's a revelation, he knows that it's an act of compassion, he knows that it's an act of grace for people to follow him, but that very statement, I am the way, is a very challenge to people to know whether or not they will follow.

[ 29 : 01 ] Jesus says, I am the way, and the implication is, will you follow? The way is laid out, I'm the way, but will you follow?

And that's the challenge to all of God's people, okay, Israel and the church today. God has given us his way, okay, it's not as if we don't know how to walk or what direction we're going in.

The issue is always about our will to do so. Do we actually have a will to do it? The way is clear, the way is Jesus, but are we willing, are we moving our feet?

That's the challenge. So Israel could not be the light to the surrounding nations because they did not have the will to be.

They had the way, but they did not have the will. They could not be the blessing to the nations around them, not because the way wasn't laid out for them, but because they didn't have the will to be, to follow in God's way.

[ 30 : 10 ] So we see the need for Jesus, not only because Israel failed, but because there's only some things that Jesus can do. Okay? Jesus is the light of the world.

He's the one that gives that spiritual transformation, bringing people out of darkness into his marvelous light, bringing people into his grace and his compassion, bringing the salvation promised as we see in Isaiah 49, bringing that salvation promised.

Every promise of God is yes and amen in Jesus. So here's the exhortation. Here's the exhortation as we close. Christians are called not to lose their saltiness, which means that it must be possible too.

If Jesus is saying don't lose it, then the implication is you could, but don't do that. Jesus says that you're the light of the world, but then he goes on to say don't hide it.

don't hide it under a bush, don't hide it in a place where it cannot be seen, where it cannot be seen out there in the dark. Okay, don't do that.

[ 31 : 19 ] And the reason Jesus is saying you're the, about the losing saltiness and hiding the light, is because it's possible to do that. Okay, the reason he's telling you the possibility of that is because he doesn't want you to do that.

It's true that our salvation has been accomplished by Christ, but we're not talking about that. We're talking about our part in the mission. And that doesn't take away from what Jesus has done, because what Jesus has done, only Jesus can do.

Only Jesus can save, but that's not the point here. The point here is whether or not we're the light and the salt that we ought to be. Whether or not, like the nation of Israel, we are committing the same type of sins they did, repetitively, and are we repeating the same type of mistakes, the same type of sin?

We notice the connection between light and light, we ought then to notice the connection between their sin and possibly ours, and how to repent of it. We don't want to lose their saltiness, because the only thing it's good for is to be trampled underfoot.

And we don't want to hide our light, because it defeats the purpose of it being given. dark. So we are salt and light, but we are salt and light in a world that is decaying and dark.

[ 32 : 45 ] That's where we are sent. So here's the conclusion. Darkness is frightening. Nobody likes, many don't like the dark.

Nobody likes this dark. dark. But it's this darkness that you have been sent out into, that we have been sent out into as light of the world. We see it in history, we see it in the fulfillment of Christ, and now we see it in the history of the church.

Israel are a light to the nations. Jonah was a light to Nineveh, a place where he did not want to go. But Jonah being sent to Nineveh was the very sign of God's compassion on a people who lived in absolute spiritual darkness, in absolute sin.

Nobody wants to go to Nineveh, but God wants to go to Nineveh. Nobody wants to go to Nineveh but God. And God had Jonah to go there for him.

And Jonah didn't want to go. But by Jonah going, demonstrated God's compassion for a nation in absolute sin and darkness. We have been left in the world.

[ 33 : 59 ] And no one likes it down here. Okay? Some holidays may be great. Okay? Some of us may have beautiful homes with lots of nice things in them. And all of those things ought to be enjoyed.

You ought to thank God for them and enjoy them every day. But by and large, the world is dark. And we don't like living in it. And it doesn't take long for us to turn on the TV or the radio and just to see how dark it is and the desire to be somewhere else.

And yet God has left us here. Why? As a light to that nation. As a light to the world so that we may show his compassion. And so we can't afford to be like Israel.

We can't afford to be like Jonah. I'm not going. Okay? Because the way has been provided, our will ought to cooperate. And Jonah is a demonstration of where there is God's way, he did not have God's will.

He did not share the compassion that God had for the nation of Nineveh. Okay? He just didn't have it. And that is a failing on his part and something that he had to repent of.

[ 35 : 08 ] And you never know, there just might be a few Jonahs in the church. Okay? We're still God's people. We're still loved by God. We still receive his compassion. We have all the benefits, but we just don't want to share them.

We get to enjoy everything. Okay? We just don't want them to have it because it's scary out there. And I understand that, but we can't get away from the fact that that is where God has called you to go.

Jesus said, and I'll finish with this, you are the light of the world, and don't hide yourself. You're the light of the world, don't hide. Amen.