



uncommon
THE HOLY ONE OF GOD IS COMING

LESSONS:

1. Was Jesus just Common? (12/7)
2. He would be Compassionate and Holy (12/14)
3. His Birth would Announce His Kingdom (12/21)
4. His Childhood Among the Religious (12/28)
5. His Life Growing Up Among the Gentiles (1/4)
6. The Challenges of the Jewish Religion (1/11)
7. The Challenges of Gentile Religions (1/18)
8. The Creator Among the Created (1/25)
9. The Lord Against the Deceiver (2/1)
10. The Priest Among the Worshippers (2/15)
11. The King Among the Citizens (2/22)
- 12. The Hope of the Nations (3/1)**

Lesson 11 | **The Hope of the Nations** (3/1)

Read ahead: Luke 1:46-55; Matthew 12:15-21; Colossians 1:26-27; Romans 15:8-13

Objective | If it was “**at the right time**, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 6:6) and “**when the fulness of time came**, [that] God sent His Son.” (4:4), there is something helpful for us to understand the culture and the climate of the times in which Jesus lived. And He was born to be King.

In Isaiah, God proclaimed that the nations would put their hope in His Servant (c.f. Isaiah 42:1-4). The Bible uses this word “nations” (in Greek ‘ethnos’ and in Hebrews ‘gowy’) over 500 times. From the first to the last, the nations have always been central to God’s purposes. Abram’s seed would “*bless all nations*” (Genesis 12:3) and John’s vision ends with “*Come! Let anyone who hears, say, Come! Let the one who is thirsty, Come! And let the one who desires take the water of life freely*” (Revelation 22:17).

From the outset, the promise of this coming Uncommon One was to be a blessing to everyone in every nation. God said that He would make Abram the “*Father of many nations*” (Genesis 17:5) but the focus of the Divine Plan was the one who would bless every nation (Genesis 12:3). The line of Abraham’s seed is traced through Genesis in the tribe of Judah, “*until He comes to whom the sceptre belongs and the obedience of the nations is his*” (Genesis 49:10). Even here the obedience of the nations is in clear focus. When Matthew quotes the passage of Isaiah referred to above in the life of Jesus (42:1-4), it is so that “*In his name the nations will put their hope*”.

This great hope is Jesus Christ (the ‘root of Jesse’) and Jesus is the key to God’s plans for the whole world. God says, “On that day the root of Jesse, will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will look to him for guidance, and his resting place will be glorious.” (Isaiah 11:10). While “the Lord will comfort Zion” (Isaiah 51:3), **to the nations** Messiah will also bring justice (Isaiah 42:1) because “*It is not enough for you to be my servant raising up the tribes of Jacob and restoring the protected ones of Israel. I will also make you a light for the nations, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth.*” (Isaiah 49:6). Through Jesus God draws to Himself a “*chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession.*” Why? So that we might “*declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light*” (1Peter 2:9-10). And that “we” is all peoples.

Isaiah 42:1-7 is the second of four passages in Isaiah that describe the “Servant of the Lord.” The first came in Isaiah 41:8-20, where the servant was clearly Israel, Jacob, the descendant of Abraham. Commentator John Oswalt notes: “The identity of this “servant” [in Isaiah 42] has been the source of endless controversy. The differences between him and the servant Israel [in chapter 41] are striking. The servant Israel is fearful and blind, yet God loves him and will deliver him so that he can be God’s evidence to the nations that he is indeed God. But this Servant (of Isaiah 42, dph), who only appears here in chapters 40-48 and but three times in chapters 49-50, is of a different sort. He is always obedient and responsive to God, his mission is to bring justice to the nations for God, and he is to be a “light” to the nations and a “covenant” to the people (of Israel, see 49:6). In contrast to the promises of divine blessing constantly being given to the servant Israel, this (suffering, dph) servant receives no benefits through his ministry but only increasing difficulty. In sum, whoever this is, it is not the nation of Israel; it is another figure altogether... The further description of the ministry of this Servant in 42:6-7 confirms that this is not the nation but someone who will function for the nation and indeed for the world. Where Israel was blind and deaf, captive to the powers of this world, this Servant will give sight and freedom” (John N. Oswalt, “Isaiah,” in The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003),

Matthew’s Gospel speaks of Jesus as this very servant. In light of opposition from the leaders of Israel in chapter 12, by the end of the chapter, Jesus disengages from the Jewish leaders, at least in Galilee, for there will be later confrontations in Jerusalem. But here, Jesus “withdrew” (verse 15) from the Pharisees and commanded those he healed to “lie low” and not make it known that he healed them. This was not yet the

time to stir up messianic expectations. Matthew (12:17-21) goes on to say that this is a fulfillment of certain verses in Isaiah 42:

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

Though not all of the servant passages, this part, quoting from Isaiah 42:1-4, emphasizes that **Jesus is God’s servant**, chosen by Him, filled with the Spirit, yet humble, going where “no one will hear his voice in the streets,” in his role as Messiah, and – twice in this passage – bringing “justice to the nations” (12:18) and leading “justice to victory” (12:20). This stands in contrast to the way Israel had acted as God’s servant – and now God’s servant, Jesus, will bring hope to the nations.

Then there is Paul’s sermon in Acts 13:16-40 in Pisidian Antioch. First, this message was addressed to **Jews and Gentiles alike**. We should note that Paul clearly addressed his words to both Jews (“men of Israel”) and Gentiles (“you Gentiles who fear God”) (13:16) and then, “*Brothers, descendants of Abraham’s family, and those Gentiles among you who fear God, the message of this salvation has been sent to us*” (13:26). He recounts a Reader’s Digest overview of Israel’s history in order to get to his point: “*From this man’s descendants, as he promised, God brought to Israel the Savior, Jesus.*” (13:22). Then he summarized the life and mission of John and Jesus. But in the death of Jesus, was the beginning of this good news: “*When they had carried out all that had been written about him, they took him down from the tree and put him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and he appeared for many days to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. And we ourselves proclaim to you the good news of the promise that was made to our ancestors.*” And after securing that Jesus had been raised from the dead, Paul concluded, “*Therefore, let it be known to you, brothers and sisters, that through this man forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you. Everyone who believes is justified through him from everything that you could not be justified from through the law of Moses*” (13:29-40).

The message of the good news will always include, “*But God...*” (Ephesians 3:1-10). And the anchor of this good news, and the hope it brings, is **the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead** (13:30, c.f. 1Corinthians 13:1-3).

Jesus staked His entire earthly mission on His rising from the dead. When Jews asked what sign He brought since He worked these miracles, Jesus replied, “*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again*” (John 2:19). And then John tells us that “*Jesus was speaking about the temple of his body. So after he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the saying that Jesus had spoken*” (2:18-22). Even in Matthew, on another occasion, a law expert questioned Jesus for a sign and Jesus answered, “*An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights*” (Matthew 12:38-40).

The resurrection of Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies

1. Psalm 2:7; cited in Acts 15:33.
2. Isaiah 55:3, NASB, cited in Acts 15:34.
3. Psalm 16:10, cited in Acts 15:35.

And it was this latter text that Peter used in His sermon in Acts 2: “*But God raised him up, having released him from the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held in its power. For David says about him, ‘I saw the Lord always in front of me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced; **my body also will live in hope**, because you will not leave my soul in Hades, nor permit your Holy One to experience decay. You have made known to me the paths of life;*

you will make me full of joy with your presence” (2:25-28). And then concluded, “David by foreseeing this spoke about the resurrection of the Christ... This Jesus God raised up, and we are all witnesses of it” (Acts 2:29-32).

Notice how similar Peter’s argument for the resurrection of Jesus is to that of Paul. It is obvious to Peter and Paul, as it should be to anyone, that David was not speaking of himself, but of another – his descendant, Jesus the Messiah. And even more so – that **“my body also will live in hope.”**

Jesus was formed from birth to be God’s servant (at the incarnation). He came to restore Jacob (Israel – the Jews) to Himself. He was honored in the Lord’s sight. Not only will the Lord Jesus restore Israel to Himself; He will also be a *“light to the Gentiles,”* bringing many of them into the kingdom through faith in Himself as the Messiah. The apostles, as servants of The One True Servant, continue to proclaim this Light to the Gentiles. In this way, salvation will encompass not only Israel, but the whole world (Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:46-47). This is completely consistent with our Lord’s words to those gathered at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30) and with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

The following week after Paul’s first sermon, *“the whole town assembled to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and begin to contradict what Paul was saying, insulting him. Paul and Barnabas boldly replied, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first. Since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us:*

*I have made you
a light for the Gentiles
to bring salvation
to the ends of the earth” [Isaiah 49:6].*

When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and honored the word of the Lord... “

The Gentiles were ecstatic when they heard these words. they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord because the hope that had so needed (and never realized they wanted) had now come to them – by grace through faith.

The Messiah’s light would be their hope – and **He would bring them justice from God** (c.f. a righteousness by faith – and not by the law) (see Romans 3:10-26).

These sermons show that God has connected all the “dots” of the Old Testament in Jesus. It is the offer of justification by faith. In Jesus, one can obtain the forgiveness of sins, something that the Law could never accomplish and something the Law never offered the non-Jew.

The gospel is not one of many different ways to God. The gospel, as a matter of the greatest urgency, is the hope of the nations. That is why when they preached it, the hearers were offered two options: 1) believe Jesus as King and obtain the forgiveness of sins, or 2) reject Jesus as King and suffer the penalty of God’s eternal wrath. It was a bold confrontation with bold benefits – and today – there should be no reason to change it. For in changing it, we lose fellowship with God (2John 9). **But in believing, we all have hope:**

*“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have also obtained access through him by faith[b] into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. **This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us”** (Romans 5:1-5).*