

GOD'S HEART FOR THE NATIONS:

Why the Unreached World Is Every Christian's Concern

by Nathan Burd

From the very first page of Scripture to the very last, one thing is unmistakably clear: God has always had a heart for the entire world. Not just your neighborhood. Not just your country. Not just the people who look, talk, and worship like you. From Genesis to Revelation, God's heart for all nations unfolds through story after story after story.

YOU WERE CHOSEN FOR THIS

In Exodus 19:6, God tells His people that He has chosen them as "a kingdom of priests, for all nations." Not one priest... every person in Israel was chosen to be a priest to the rest of the world.

As the story unfolds, Israel keeps missing it. God said, I have chosen you for this—but they got distracted. Then Jesus shows up. In Mark 11:15-17, He walks into the temple and finds the outer court—the very place where Gentiles and foreigners came to seek God. The local Jews had set up tables right in the space designated for Gentile worship. The exchange rates were inflated. There was no room left for the nations to pray. Jesus is furious. He flips the tables, drives everyone out, and quotes Isaiah 56:7 directly: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (NIV).

Now look at 1 Peter 2:9: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (NASB).

WHAT "NATIONS" ACTUALLY MEANS

When Scripture talks about "nations," it is not referring to geopolitical countries like the United States, Kenya, or China; it is talking about ethno-linguistic people groups—people with their own distinct language and culture. Tribes might be a better word.

THE WEIGHT OF THE NUMBERS

Over 3 billion people, roughly 42% of the world's population, live in unreached or unengaged people groups. Five out of six non-Christians in the world have no opportunity to hear the Gospel—even if they wanted to.

And yet, of 400,000 cross-cultural missionaries, only 3% go to the unreached. Roughly thirty times as many missionaries go to reached people groups to work with Christians as go to unreached people groups. We have 900 churches and 78,000 evangelical Christians for every single unreached people group on the planet.

Jesus said it plainly in Matthew 24:14: "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (ESV). And in Revelation 7:9, we get a glimpse of that finish line—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation worshiping before the throne of God for all of eternity.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE GOES

Onwas was a Hadzabe elder in East Africa. The Hadzabe are one of the last true hunter-gatherer tribes on earth. They live in grass huts, hunt with bows and arrows, and gather whatever food they can find. Until recently, they were completely unreached.

We drove into Onwas' village one evening. He asked why we had shown up, and eventually, we began to share the message of Jesus with him. Right there, around that campfire, Onwas decided to follow Christ. In the years that followed, Onwas proved the genuineness of his faith by how he lived acted, and how the fruit of the Spirit burst out of his life in all sorts of directions.

Then one day we received a message from Mary, our key indigenous partner among the Hadzabe: Onwas had passed away. I immediately felt like a ton of bricks had fallen on my heart. Over the years of ministering to Onwas and serving alongside him, he had become like a Hadzabe grandfather to us. But as I sat with that grief and prayed, an image came to my mind: Onwas dancing in front of the throne of Jesus, praising and worshiping Him as I had so often seen him doing in the East African bush.

God's heart for the nations is not background noise in Scripture; it is the whole story.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IS NOT AN OPTION TO BE CONSIDERED, BUT A COMMAND TO BE OBEYED."