

Article of the Month – March 2009

Twelve Missionary Themes in Genesis (2)

By Steef van 't Slot, PhD

Last month I started a series of 12 missionary themes that we find in Genesis. This month we look at the second theme:

Theme 2: Sent, But To Do What? The Mandate



The first sending we read about in Genesis is the creation-mandate in which man is commissioned to rule¹ and to ‘be fruitful, increase, fill the earth, and subdue it’. This mandate implied the working of the Garden and taking care of it.² Therefore, world missions includes *salvation* outreach to man (spiritually and physically), as well as *caring* outreach to flora and fauna including the environment.

The creation-mandate was not withdrawn after the fall, but its execution now encountered hindrances. There would be pain³ in birthing children, in marriage relationships, in agricultural reproduction and in the work place (heavy work).

The post-Flood mandate⁴ reminds us of the creation-mandate; yet it appears to have lost its original brilliance. The primary meaning of ‘ruling’ was: serving what was entrusted to you – but it degenerated into ‘lording it over’. When Jesus Christ appeared on earth He restored the right perspective on Godly leadership.⁵

Starting with Abram, the mandate became focused on the blessing through him of all the families of the earth. It was repeated through God’s revelations to Isaac and Jacob.⁶

Before **Abraham**, type of God the Father, became a sender he had his own ministry. He worshiped the true God,⁷ set the captives free, tithed to Melchisedec, testified to the king of Sodom,⁸ interceded for the lost people of his time,⁹ prayed for healing of a pagan king’s household,¹⁰ and was prepared to sacrifice Isaac.¹¹

¹ Gen. 1:26,28

² Gen. 2:15

³ Gen. 3:16,17

⁴ Gen. 9:1-3

⁵ Matt. 20:25-28

⁶ Gen. 12:1-3, 26:2-4,24 and 28:13-15, 35:11,12 respectively

⁷ Gen. 12:7,8; 13:18

⁸ Gen. 14:18-20,22,23

⁹ Gen. 18:16-33

¹⁰ Gen. 20:7,17,18

Abraham as first human sender:

He sent Eliezer to find a bride for Isaac. This typifies how God the Father sent the Holy Spirit to find a Bride, the Church, for His Son. Eliezer prayed before he addressed Rebecca; the Holy Spirit intercedes for the saints.¹²

Before **Isaac**, type of God's Son, became a sender, he also had a ministry. He was willing to be sacrificed,¹³ received his bride from elsewhere,¹⁴ prayed for his wife,¹⁵ received the Lord's revelation of Abraham's blessing, now resting on him,¹⁶ worshiped the true God¹⁷ and begot two peoples,¹⁸ (pictures of the true and the false church, growing up together until they went their separate ways).

The second sender, Isaac:

Similar to Abraham, Isaac sent Jacob to find himself a wife, outside Canaan. Typological significance is found in the separation between the brothers. Esau represents carnal Christianity, from which Jacob had to separate himself. Jacob should not be contaminated with the idolatrous Canaanite atmosphere in which Esau had placed himself.¹⁹

Before **Jacob** became a sender, he too showed ministerial characteristics. He met God and received the blessing of Abraham and Isaac,²⁰ found his wife outside the world of Canaan,²¹ grew into a clan that would bring forth the nation of Israel, showed pastoral care for his flocks as well as for his 'family-flock',²² prayed for his family,²³ represents true Christianity, but God had to deal with him in order to free him from his old nature.²⁴

The third sender, Jacob:

In this story the strongest typological value of Genesis is found. Jacob (now representing God the Father) sent his beloved son Joseph (representing Jesus Christ), to look for his brothers.²⁵ The brothers represent lost humanity, which Jesus Christ came to save. In a sense Joseph later also 'saved' his brothers.

Joseph's ministry was more Christ-like than that of his three ancestors had been. He displayed several characteristics of Jesus: His brothers envied him and felt threatened by

¹¹ Gen. 22

¹² Rom. 8:26

¹³ Gen. 22; Ps. 40:7,8; Matt. 26:42

¹⁴ Gen. 24; Matt. 22:2; Rev. 19:7,8

¹⁵ Gen. 25:21; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25

¹⁶ Gen. 26:2-5,24

¹⁷ Gen. 26:25

¹⁸ Gen. 25:22,23

¹⁹ Gen. 26:34,35; 27:46-28:1,8

²⁰ Gen. 28:10-22

²¹ Gen. 28:1,2; 29:18-30

²² Gen. 30:27-31:41; 32:7,8; 33:13,14; John 10:11,14

²³ Gen. 32:9-12

²⁴ Gen. 32:22-32; Rom. 6:6; 7:24; Gal. 2:20

²⁵ Gen. 37:3; Matt. 3:17; Gen 37:16; Matt. 15:24

him,²⁶ as did Jesus' physical family and the Pharisees.²⁷ Joseph was called by dreams to rule and so was Jesus, by divine ordination.²⁸ Joseph had to be stripped of his wealth and position to become a slave before he could rule, as was the case with Jesus.²⁹ In case of Joseph, it looked as if he had laid down his life; Jesus actually did so voluntarily.³⁰ Joseph and Jesus were treated unjustly on many occasions; Joseph might have abused his favoured position in prison to stir up a rebellion and escape, but didn't; similarly Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane might be considered a desire to escape, but He preferred to do God's will instead.³¹ Joseph preached in prison, announcing freedom for the cupbearer and condemnation for the baker; Jesus preached to the spirits in prison.³² After his humiliation Joseph was elevated to the second highest place in Egypt; Jesus received the position at the right hand of God.³³ Joseph received a new name from Pharaoh: Zaphenath-Paneah ('saviour of the world'³⁴); he saved people from physical starvation, whereas Jesus, Saviour of the World, provides salvation for people from spiritual starvation and received the Name above every name.³⁵ After a considerable period had passed Joseph made himself known to his brothers; similarly, Jesus will make Himself known to His 'brothers after the flesh', the Jews.³⁶ Joseph forgave his brothers for what they had done, as Jesus would do later.³⁷

Joseph, as fourth sender:

Jesus, sent by the Father, later sent His disciples to reach the nations with the Gospel: the Sent One became the Sender.³⁸ Joseph, also sent by his father, became sender himself: he sent his brothers to collect Benjamin and told them that they would not see his face again, unless they would bring the youngest brother.³⁹ Jesus said that He will only return after the Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in all the world, before the end comes.⁴⁰ The last converts of the nations⁴¹ have to be brought in before we will see Him again.

²⁶ Gen. 37:11,8

²⁷ Compare Gen. 37:4 e.g. with Mark 6:3, Matt. 21:45,46 and John 12:19

²⁸ Gen. 37:5-10; Ps. 2

²⁹ Gen. 37:18-28; Phil. 2:5-11

³⁰ Gen. 37:31-33; Is. 53; John 10:17,18

³¹ Gen. 39:22,23a; Matt. 26:39,42,44

³² Gen. 40; 1 Pet. 3:19

³³ Matt. 26:64

³⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible: Zaphenath-Paneah means 'abundance of life', translated by Jerome as 'savior of the world' (Dake p. 41). Meyer in 'Great Men of the Bible' –1981 – p. 126 confirms this.

³⁵ John 1:29; 3:16-18; Phil. 2:9,10

³⁶ Gen. 45; Zech. 12:10; John 19:37; Rev. 1:7

³⁷ Gen. 45:3-8; 50:15-21; Luke 23:34

³⁸ John 20:21; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8

³⁹ Gen. 42:18-20; 44:23

⁴⁰ Matt. 24:14

⁴¹ The last converts of the nations were born again the last. Spiritually seen they are the youngest.