

## Two Forces

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In the fulfillment of Israel's obligation, two forces were at work. The first of these was an *attractive force*, symbolized first by the tabernacle and then by the temple in Jerusalem. These buildings were the places where God's name dwelt. They were holy places, the heart of Israel's religious ceremony and practice. Yet they were not intended just to serve Israel. When Solomon dedicated the temple, it was clear to him that the temple had a wider purpose.

The Bible records several other foreigners who were attracted to Israel because of the evidence of God's blessing, including Ruth, a Moabite woman, and Naaman the Syrian. Hundreds of other unrecorded accounts are evidenced by the fact that on the day of Pentecost there were devout men from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) staying in Jerusalem. God's plan to reach the nations, however, include much more than a passive attraction.

A second force in operation was an active, *expansive force* which operated to send God's message beyond the borders of Israel. Some examples of Israelites who were used to proclaim God's message to other nations include captives such as Joseph and exiles such as Daniel and Esther. Or consider the prophet Jonah, who was commanded to preach repentance to Nineveh. Jeremiah was appointed as a "prophet to the nations," and it is speculated that he or other messengers may have traveled widely in delivering his many oracles. Nor did God use only the great in this role of bearing His message. It was a little Israelite slave girl who announced His healing power to Naaman, the mighty but leprous captain of the Syrian army.

Some might argue that these cases are exceptions and would point out that many of these people were captives or otherwise ministered against their wills. However, volunteerism has never been the deciding factor in furthering God's mission. God will use His people to spread His message, whether they are willing agents or not. Israel's tragic history would have been considerably different if she had been a willing instrument of God's redemptive plan. She was not. God used captivity and exile both to judge Israel's disobedience and to extend her witness beyond her borders.

These two dynamic forces are also present today. On a global scale, many are attracted to "Christian" nations because of the evidence of God's blessing through material wealth and stability. In communities, congregations where God's power and grace are evident also draw people. On a personal level, godly character attracts those who want to possess those same

qualities. Yet the gospel will not be spread to all nations simply through passive attraction. There are too many social, cultural, and geographic barriers that need to be crossed for this to happen. God's people must be willing to go to the nations with the good news if they hope to fulfill their covenant obligations.



An Attractive Force  
"Come to the Blessing"



An Expansive Force  
"Go to the Nations"

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