

8 Ancient Non-Western Civilizations

In this unit we expand our study outside of the Biblical narrative to give an overview of developments in India, China, Africa, America, and Europe from earliest times through the early Christian period. We will focus particularly on life in ancient China. The Bible study will be on the book of Jonah to remind us of the fact that God loves all nations.

Lessons

Lesson 36 – Ancient India

Lesson 37 – Ancient China

Lesson 38 – Ancient Africa, America, and Europe

Lesson 39 – Government, Culture, and Science in Ancient China

Lesson 40 – Bible Study – God’s Love for the Nations: The Story of Jonah

Books Used in This Unit

- The Bible
- *In Their Words*

Writing Assignment for This Unit

Write a two- or three-page paper on one of the following subjects.

- Write a collection of sayings or proverbs. Write down ones that you have heard which you think are especially insightful. Be sure to include phrases that you hear over and over around your house.
- Develop one idea or fact from the areas discussed in this unit and write a paper on it. You might choose a particular people group from Europe or the Americas, a discovery from China, an individual that is mentioned in the lessons, or some other topic. Tell why this topic interests you.
- Nation project: Write about the history of your country during the period before the coming of Christ. Tell how society changed and what influences came to bear on the people.



Columns at the Mayan city of Chichen Itza (Mexico)

Lesson 36 – Ancient India

The Indus River People

Wide, straight streets are divided into regular city blocks. Many homes and places of business are built exactly alike with even the same size of bricks. An efficient sewer system serves the residents of the city.

This is not a description of modern America or Europe, but of two great cities of northern India around 2000 BC. About the time of the Egyptian and Sumerian civilizations, another highly advanced group of people lived along the Indus River. Their cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were discovered in the 1920s and have been excavated since then. Our knowledge of this early civilization is somewhat limited because their writing has not been translated and because archaeological digging is difficult close to the river, but what we do know about them provides more evidence of the amazing abilities which God gave to humans and more proof that the typical view of social evolution is not supported by the facts.

The cities of the Indus people were larger than any Sumerian city-state, and the 950-mile stretch of the Indus River these people inhabited rivaled the size of the older kingdom of Egypt. The Indus people were skilled in surveying and building. They irrigated their crops and were the earliest known producers of cotton. They traded their cloth to Mesopotamia for precious metals and made beautiful jewelry and stone carvings. Apparently they worshiped a mother-goddess and another deity portrayed with three faces. They also worshiped some animals and trees.

The Aryans

It is estimated that the Indus River civilization flourished between 2500 and 1500 BC. After a period of decline (evidenced, for instance, by poorer and less standardized buildings), the area was invaded by tribes known as the Aryans. We believe the Aryans came from the area north of the Caucasus Mountains and between the Black and Caspian Seas. Many groups are believed to have migrated out of this region, including the Hittites who settled in Asia Minor and other tribes that moved to Europe. The peoples who

A theory developed in nineteenth-century Europe that white people, especially northern Europeans, were superior to others. Because of their supposed place of origin, this theory referred to northern Europeans as Aryans. Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany took this idea one step further. They claimed that the Germans were the most superior part of the Aryan race and used this belief as justification for their hatred of the Jews and their aggression toward other countries. The Nazis used an Aryan Sanskrit sign of good luck, the swastika, as their symbol. Interestingly, a form of the swastika has been found in many places, including Egypt and Turkey. Our family saw a kind of swastika in a picture of a Native America display from the early twentieth century in South Dakota.

are thought to have left this area and settled elsewhere are called Indo-European tribes. The Aryans (their name means noble) pushed the Indus River people further south, where they reorganized and flourished later.

Family and village life was of central importance to the Aryans. Each of the Aryan tribes was led by a rajah or chief. The rajah selected a headman for each village who oversaw life there. An extended family usually lived in the same house. They jointly owned property and cared for the family's sick and elderly. The male head of the family led in religious ceremonies, arranged marriages for his children, and was the family's representative in village decisions. Women were apparently quite active in the earlier stages of Aryan society. Some were warriors and took part in local discussions. However, after a time the women withdrew from public life and became more devoted to household work. By about 700 BC, the Aryans had developed a written language called Sanskrit. It was used mostly by priests for recording religious literature.

The Aryans maintained sharply defined social classes. The earliest classes were the warriors, the priests, and the commoners; and a person could move from one class to another. Later, they recognized four classes: the warriors; the priests (called the Brahmins); the class that included landowners, merchants, and herders (what we might call a middle class); and finally the servants, peasants, and all non-Aryans. As war became less important and religious activity became more important, the Brahmins replaced the warriors as the highest social class.



The Aryans placed a high value on cattle. Their word for war means "the desire for cattle." Wealth and the value of land and other goods were measured in terms of cattle. Extended families owned cattle jointly. Cattle were killed for food early on, but later such was forbidden.

These classifications hardened into what were called castes. Membership in a caste was the result of simply being born into the caste of one's parents. The jobs to be held by members of each caste were strictly defined, and one could not marry outside of his or her caste. As though this were not enough, the castes were further divided into a complex system of up to 3,000 subcastes or groups. In addition, the lowest rank was given to those who were outside of any caste. These were the outcastes, and they were considered the untouchables. The caste system came about as the result of the Hindu religion.

Hinduism

The Hindu faith is not based on one person's ideas or teachings. Instead, it is a blend of Aryan beliefs and the ideas of the people they conquered. Hindu teachings are an attempt to express the truth about the meaning of life and the individual's place in the universe.

According to Hindu doctrine, the Brahma is the single unifying force that is present in everything and every person. Nothing exists apart from Brahma. The three most important gods that are expressions of this universal spirit are Brahma (the creator god), Vishnu (the preserver god), and Shiva (the destroyer god). Hindus worship many other gods that are different aspects of Brahma. The Aryans were especially interested in gods of nature and in Indra, the warrior god.

Every individual soul is part of the universal soul or atman. The pursuit of unworthy goals keeps a soul separated from the atman. Worthy goals include a devotion to the truth, respect for life, and detachment from the world. The goal of life is to be free from one's individual life and to be unified with the atman. However, this takes more than one life, so the soul has a series of rebirths. When the body dies, the soul is reincarnated in another body. The soul can move closer to or farther from the atman depending on how a person lives. If a person lives well, he or she will be reincarnated in a higher caste; if not, the soul will live in someone of a lower caste or in an animal. This is why cows are not slaughtered. They might house the soul of a loved one. Karma is the sum total of all the actions of a person's life that affects his or her next life. This karma determines into which caste a person is born. Having good karma includes being obedient to one's caste and proper social behavior. This gave a spiritual rationale for strictly maintaining caste lines.



Hindu Temple in India

By about 600 BC, the Brahmans, who preserved the religious texts and performed the religious rituals, were believed to be closest to the atman and thus were considered the highest caste. Some objected to the Brahmans being the only pathway to the atman. These dissenters taught that meditation and self-discipline could lead one to a higher spiritual understanding. One result of this belief was the practice of yoga.

Several writings embody Hindu teachings. The Bhagavad-Gita (Song of God) is an Aryan work. It is an epic in itself, but it is actually part of an even longer epic work that tells of Aryan wars. The Vedas are religious writings that date from 1500 to 1000 BC and provide information about Aryan life. The Upanishads are oral teachings that developed around 800 to 600 BC and offer ideas about the meaning of life and reincarnation.



Siddhartha Gautama

Buddhism

The Buddhist religion began as an offshoot of Hinduism. It was begun by Siddhartha Gautama, a follower of Hinduism, who was born in the foothills of the Himalayas about 563 BC. Gautama was the son of a wealthy warrior and therefore lived a sheltered and privileged life. He married and had one son.

One day, when Gautama was 29 years old, he came in succession upon an old man, a sick man, and a corpse. Seeing these as he did affected him deeply. He left his family and lived as a beggar to try to find the causes of suffering. Gautama did not find the answers in the Hindu writings or in a life of self-denial. After a six-year pursuit, one day while sitting under a tree, Gautama believed that he was enlightened. Buddha means “enlightened one,” and this title is how he came to be known. Gautama began teaching his beliefs to others. He organized groups of monks and nuns who were especially dedicated to following his philosophy.

Buddha identified four universal truths. First, suffering and misery are universal. Second, the cause of suffering is desire. Even the good things that we want bring suffering because they cannot last. Third, the way to end suffering is to overcome desire. The goal of life is release from desire in the state of nirvana, which involves wanting nothing. Fourth, the way to escape pain and suffering is what Buddha called the Middle Way, made up of the Eightfold Path. This path of life involves compassion, knowledge of the good, good intentions, right speech, right conduct, pursuit of a proper livelihood, mindfulness, and meditation. These virtues avoided the extremes of self-denial and of Hindu worldliness.

The philosophy of Buddhism adopted some elements of Hinduism, including the belief in karma, the cycle of rebirth, and the view that the world is a place of suffering from which people want to escape. It was different in that Buddha did not believe in the soul or in any gods. He rejected castes and said that priests were not the most important people.

Buddha died in 483 BC, supposedly while visiting a poor blacksmith's family. According to the story, he ate spoiled food rather than embarrass his host family. After his death, Buddha's followers took his ideas throughout India. His sayings were gathered in a collection called Three Baskets of Wisdom. As with almost all religious movements, Buddhism divided into two groups. One continued the way that Buddha had outlined, while the other exalted Buddha to the status of a god and said that other teachers had achieved enlightenment also. In India, Buddhism and Hinduism coexisted. Hinduism absorbed many Buddhist beliefs, and Buddha came to be worshiped as a Hindu god. Eventually Buddhism merged back into Hinduism.

Later Dynasties

The Aryans weakened their empire from within by inter-tribal wars that occurred after 1000 BC. In 512 BC, northwestern India was controlled by Persia. The kingdom of Magadha in northeastern India combined with other groups to push the Persians out. They extended their control further south to the Ganges River. This was the first of several empires in India, but their rule was continually threatened by foreign invaders.

The Maurya dynasty arose in 321 BC and gained control over all of northern India. Its leaders built a luxurious capital on the Ganges. Later rulers established provincial governments and practiced tight administrative control, including sending spies to check on



Indian architecture



Indian landscape

provincial governors (they might have been influenced by the example of Persia in this; see Lesson 31). The Mauryans used homing pigeons to send messages to their capital. Road building increased and trade with China and Western Asia flourished.

One Mauryan leader, Asoka, extended his empire across the central plateau of India through war; but when he heard of the death toll from the campaign he repented of warfare, renounced violence, and adopted Buddhism. Asoka

sent government representatives out to teach good works, non-violence, and the way of peace. Buddhism became a strong influence in India because of this change, and Buddhist missionaries took their message to Southeast Asia.

After the reign of Asoka, India was racked with repeated civil wars and foreign invaders. One invasion was carried out in the second century BC by Bactrian Greeks, the remnants of Alexander's Greek forces who had stayed in northwestern India when Alexander's empire collapsed. Later, the Kushans invaded and guided a culture that flourished for two hundred years. They spread Buddhism throughout India and into other countries and increased trade with China.

From 320 to 535 AD the Gupta dynasty had the upper hand. Chandra Gupta I reunited India and began a Golden Age of peace and advances in the arts and science even as the Roman Empire was collapsing in the West. Advances took place in the fields of medicine (such as the use of herbal medicines and improved surgical techniques) and industry (including the production of steel, textiles, and dyes). The Indians developed the zero as a place holder and a decimal number system that they taught to the Arabs. We call them Arabic numerals because Western peoples learned the system from Arabs while European countries were still using the cumbersome Roman numeral system.

The religious landscape became more diverse. As Hindu beliefs spread, it absorbed Buddhist beliefs as well as the beliefs and gods of other peoples. Buddha forbade the worship of idols, but his followers ignored this teaching and created gods and shrines which pictured gods, animals, and scenes from Buddha's life.

During the Maurya and Gupta dynasties, in an attempt to strengthen religious purity, the caste system became stricter and more complex. Women married in their early teens and were in complete subjection to the husband and his family. If she was widowed, she remained with the husband's family. However, a widow was considered unlucky and was often avoided and isolated by the man's family. Rather than endure such isolation, some widows, especially in the upper classes, threw themselves on their husband's funeral pyre. The belief developed that this was a noble deed that purged the sins of both the husband and

the wife and brought them back together. Some members of the upper castes practiced polygamy. Sons were much more highly valued than daughters because they carried on the family name. It was not unusual for female children to be abandoned.

The kingdoms of the southern region of India were never conquered by the empires of the north. The southern people included the proud Tamil, who lived on the southeastern coast. The Tamil carried on trade with Rome (by means of trading ships that made the round trip to Rome and back) and later with China. Even today, Tamil separatists want to have freedom from the rest of India. The Gupta dynasty ended with the invasion of the Huns from Central Asia. Small independent kingdoms dotted India for about 1000 years.

Conclusion

Hindu and Buddhist teachings did little to bring peace and security to the lives of people on the Indian subcontinent. Instead, they seem to have encouraged the people to accept suffering and misery rather than to try to improve their lot. Since one does not know in what stage of reincarnation he is, one can try his best but never know if he is making progress. This would seem to discourage trying harder. The various tribes and groups of India have been given to wars as much as other peoples. The patterns of the past have definitely contributed to the ways of the present.

*...It is appointed for men to die once
and after this comes judgment...
Hebrews 9:27*

Bible Study Question

On what basis is salvation offered in Jesus, and how does this differ from Hindu and Buddhist beliefs?

Grammar Point – Unrelated Ideas

Do not place unrelated ideas in the same sentence. *Unrelated:* **Jake is a talented pianist, and he wants to hike the Appalachian Trail.**

Lesson 37 – Ancient China

They called themselves Chung Kuo, the Middle Kingdom. In their minds, they were the center of the world. They have given rise to significant inventions and developments that have affected the rest of the world – when the rest of the world found out about them. We call this land China.



Chinese landscape

The Shang Dynasty

The pattern should be familiar by now. Farming villages dot the banks of a mighty river. A few nobles own the most land and the best houses, and they have the greatest wealth and the most political power. Competing lords vie for power during years of civil strife until one man or one family emerges victorious. This pattern occurred in many countries. In China, it took place along the twisting Yellow River in northern China. It

was a river given to alternating droughts and floods. The “River of Sorrows” as it was called often brought destruction to those who depended on it for life.

The Shang Dynasty was the earliest succession of rulers in this region. It held power between about 1600 and 1122 BC. Even at this early date, the Chinese showed their remarkable intellectual capacities. They developed a system of writing using pictograms (agreed-upon symbols illustrating objects they knew). The next step involved ideograms, symbols that represented concepts. Written Chinese developed some 3,000 symbols, and eventually about 50,000 characters were used. This made the language difficult to use, especially by anyone not wealthy enough to take the time to learn it. Because they wrote on vertical strips of bamboo and wood, they wrote in vertical columns instead of across a page.

It was during the Shang Dynasty that the Chinese developed the use of bronze for practical and aesthetic applications and created such inventions as the two-wheeled war chariot and an early form of porcelain. Chang artisans developed products of silk, jade, and ivory that became much sought after by traders. Contact with the Chinese was difficult because of the natural barriers of mountains and deserts, but it was not impossible. The Chinese established trade with Mesopotamia fairly early on, despite having to deal with invaders from Manchuria and Mongolia. Mathematicians in China developed a decimal numbering system; and astronomers created a 12-month, 365 1/4 day calendar.

The days of the Shang also saw the spread of a spiritual ritual that continues in some form even today. The Chinese believed that powerful gods controlled life, weather, crops,

and all aspects of life. The people tried to influence the gods not only by their own prayers and rituals but by calling on their deceased ancestors to appeal to the gods as well. To impress the ancestors of their sincerity and need, the people began the practice of ancestor worship. People would sometimes want to ask their ancestors a question. A priest would write the question (usually a question that could be answered yes or no) on a piece of bone, make notches in it, and apply a heated rod to the notches. The way the bone cracked would be interpreted by the priest as the ancestor's answer. Thousands of these oracle bones have been found at ancient religious sites. Today many Chinese worship or at least pay their respects to their ancestors in home ceremonies.

The Chou Dynasty

The Shang Dynasty was overtaken by the Chou Dynasty in 1122 BC. The Chou rulers continued for almost a thousand years, until 256 BC. The Chou believed in what they called the Mandate of Heaven. They believed that an emperor had a divine right to rule if he ruled well. If he did not, he deserved to fall. They thought the Shang had failed to rule well and so deserved to lose their power. The Mandate of Heaven, of course, was a handy rationale for seizing and holding power. How could anyone argue with a mandate from heaven?

Because the Chou had to rule such a large area, they developed a feudal system of power. The Chou emperor allowed nobles to rule their smaller kingdoms as they saw fit and promised protection for them. In return, the nobles promised loyalty, paid tribute, and when called upon gave service to the emperor. The Chou government encouraged farming, and the period saw the introduction of fertilizer, iron tools, irrigation, and the ox-drawn plow. The feudal system apparently did not work well enough, however. Most of the last half of the Chou period was marked by wars among the feudal states.

One important development that affected government and society was the growth of a large bureaucracy to oversee the governing of the empire. Government officials eventually became the ruling class because of their power and because they acquired large land holdings. In the Chou class structure, below the ruling class was the peasant class who worked the fields, then artisans and merchants (because they did not work on the land), and finally soldiers.

Confucius and Other Philosophers

As Chinese scientists gained insights about the physical world, Chinese philosophers wanted to gain greater insights into human relationships. Although they recognized the



*Chinese pictograph
for heaven*

spiritual world, they were more concerned about the practical matters of right living in this life. They wanted to determine the way to establish and maintain a stable and orderly society and government. With the frequent instability they saw in their government, their goal is understandable.



Confucius (551-479 BC?)

Confucius. The best known Chinese philosopher was born about 551 BC and became a scholar employed as a minor government official. Confucius wanted to advance in the ranks of the bureaucracy but was not able to do so, so he eventually became a tutor to the sons of wealthy families.

Confucius was deeply troubled by war, and he wanted to learn how to live a life based on high moral ideas. As he thought through the issues that made for a good life and a good society, he tried to teach his philosophy to various government officials. They rejected him, however, so he devoted himself to teaching a small group of disciples who in turn could influence others. He did not write down his insights, but his disciples did and compiled them into what are called the *Analects*.

Confucius tried to identify what practices made for peace among people and between citizens and their government. He believed that the practice of virtues produces harmony in society. These virtues, he said, should be practiced in five relationships: ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and friend to friend. In each relationship, each party has a duty and the other has a responsibility to fulfill. Family relationships especially, Confucius believed, were the foundation for a happy and stable society.

The disciples of Confucius had even greater success in getting their teacher's ideas across to others than Confucius himself did. Confucianism eventually had a great impact on Chinese law, government, and family life. His principles were not always followed, but they were influential. His insights came at a time when the Chinese did not know revealed truth about God and His way, so they were an attempt to fill a void that people, families, and societies always have without such divine teaching. Many of the sayings that Confucius wrote and compiled are good advice; but followers of Jesus know that we will never find true inner peace and salvation merely by trying to live well.

Taoism. Little is known about Lao-tze, the author of *Tao Te Ching* (The Way and Its Power). Lao-tze disagreed with Confucius about the value of behavior. He said the way to happiness is by becoming attuned to the tao or the way, the universal force that pervades everything. This is accomplished not by reason but by contemplation. Whereas Confucius encouraged right actions, Lao-tze encouraged little doing and much contemplation. While Confucius wanted to encourage government to do what is right, Lao-tze favored a restrained or limited government.

The Taoism that developed in ancient China was a combination of philosophy and mystical religion. Taoist priests had charms and spells to ward off evil spirits. These practices appealed to the common people who believed strongly in such spirits and who believed they had to cope with them every day. Taoism encouraged the simple life and time for personal meditation. It also exalted closeness with nature. By-products of this philosophy included some scientific advances. The Chinese became expert students of astronomy and botany. Gunpowder might have been developed first to use in firecrackers to frighten ghosts. When the compass was developed, it was first used for superstitious purposes, such as the positioning of graves; but sailors eventually recognized its value for navigation.

Legalism. A third philosophy is known as legalism. Its chief advocate was Han Fei Tzu, who died around 233 BC. Han took the opposite approach from Taoism regarding government. He believed that a good society could only be created through a strict, activist government with a ruler who held absolute power. Han saw that people can be swayed by selfishness, fear, and emotional appeals and are not always able to make good decisions. The only way to get people to do right is for the ruler to make laws that are reinforced with attractive rewards and strict punishments.

Later Dynasties

In 221 BC, the feudal state of Ch'in emerged victorious from another period of civil war and established the Ch'in dynasty (from which we get the name China). The new emperor decided to implement legalism and tried to impose unity on the empire. He reorganized the feudal states as administrative units directly responsible to him. The Ch'ins began an extensive program of public works including roads that helped to tie the empire together, but the projects took a heavy toll in workers' lives lost.

One project of the Ch'in dynasty was the connection of several smaller walls to create a defensive barrier in the north. The Ch'in did not build "The Great Wall" as it stands today; future leaders continued the development of this fortification. However, not even their early version of the Wall protected the Ch'in, for their dynasty collapsed around 206 BC.

The country endured another eight years of civil war before the Han dynasty restored order. The Han adopted Confucianism, expanded the



The Great Wall

country's borders, and established peace for some two hundred years. To create a more efficient government, the Han rulers instituted a civil service system. To train people for the

difficult civil service exam, an educational system was developed. The exam required knowledge of Confucianism, so the philosophy was taught in the schools.

The Han dynasty oversaw improvements in the written Chinese language, so effective that the language remained largely unchanged until 1949. Paper made from pulpwood and rags came to be produced, which encouraged the use of writing. Books of Chinese history were compiled during this time. Scientific achievements included the recognition that eclipses were regular phenomena and not actions by an angry god and the first known identification of sunspots. The Chinese produced sundials, water clocks, and a calendar that remained in use until 1912. Advances in technology included the wheelbarrow, the water mill, a harness for farm animals, and improved looms for weaving. The Han emperors encouraged foreign trade with western Asia and Europe. So much silk was sent out that the main trade route became known as the Silk Road. Buddhism was introduced into China during this period and gained a wide following among people who identified with the plight of suffering in the world.

The Han dynasty fell in 220 AD, which led to another period of civil war and a decline in foreign trade.

*By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified
in His sight; for through the Law
comes the knowledge of sin.
Romans 3:20*

Bible Study Question

What do you think the Bible says about the pattern in many societies in which some people are rich and powerful while others are relatively poor and largely unknown among men?

Grammar Point – Necessary Words

Do not leave out words that are necessary to the clarity of a sentence. *Unclear: While on vacation, my aunt sent me a box of candy. Correct: My aunt sent me a box of candy while she was on vacation. (or) While I was on vacation my aunt sent me a box of candy.*

Reading

- Read the excerpts from the *Analects* of Confucius (*In Their Words*, pages 11-12).

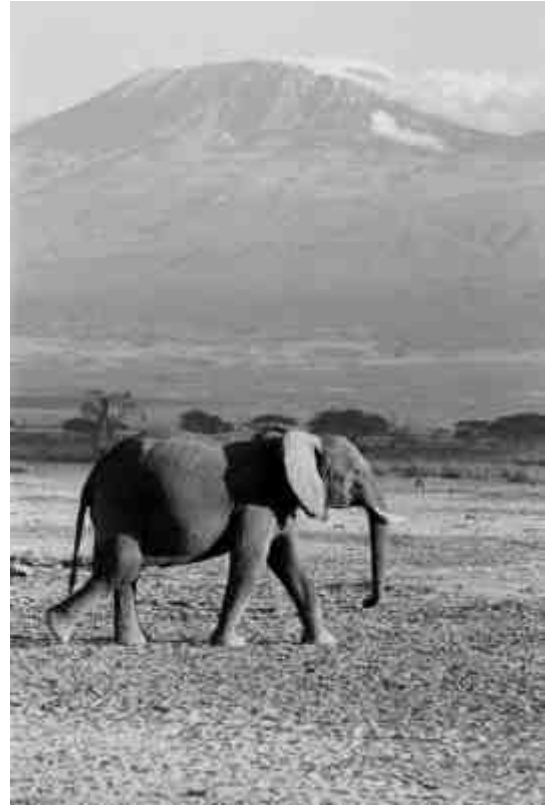
Lesson 38 – Ancient Africa, America, and Europe

Africa

Africa is a huge continent, three times the size of the continental United States. It has a varied geography that includes rain forests, deserts, mountains, grasslands or savannahs, and temperate zones (the latter in its northern and southern extremes). The many rivers in Africa provide water for farming and serve as avenues for transportation.

On its vast landscape live many different tribal nations. Scholars have estimated that between 800 and 1,000 languages are spoken on the continent. Currently forty-seven political nations exist in Africa, so obviously these political nations have many different tribal and ethnic groups within them. Some tribal groups are divided among more than one political nation.

We have already studied the Egyptian culture in Africa, but many other nations arose on the continent in ancient times as well. The kingdom of



Cush to the south of Egypt, developed early and in 750 BC conquered Egypt. The Cushites later retreated, and the civilization declined by about 200 BC. Axum, to the south of Cush,

African tribes generally did not keep written records, but their oral traditions are strong. In the early twentieth century, Hungarian researcher Emil Torday interviewed the Bushongo people in West Africa. Their leaders remembered 121 kings, in order; but they had no way to tie their reigns to European years. The Bushongo men mentioned that during the reign of the 98th king, the sun was blotted out one day. Torday knew that this was a solar eclipse. Upon checking, he found that a total solar eclipse visible in that region had occurred in 1680.

was strongly influenced by its trade with the Arab world and thus was a mixture of Arab and African cultures. The king of Axum converted to Christianity in 324 AD. Cush is mentioned in the Old Testament (see, for example, 2 Kings 19:9 and Isaiah 20:3-5). The areas of Cush and Axum later came to be known as Ethiopia. It is likely that the presence of Christianity in the region began with the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch described in Acts 8:26-40. Meanwhile, the abundant resources of salt and gold in West Africa enabled Ghana to become the first major trading state in that part of the continent.

Generally speaking, the nations and tribal groups that we know about were formed in the centuries after Christ's birth on into the Middle Ages. Africa, especially the northern part, was strongly influenced by Muslim conquests beginning in the seventh and eighth centuries AD.

Most African tribes lived in villages overseen by elders. They placed great emphasis on family life and usually lived in extended family arrangements. Men were the accepted leaders of the family and the village. Women filled different roles in different tribes, but they always played a significant role in the family. Some tribes were matrilineal; that is, they traced their family lines and inherited property through the mother. In a few tribes, wealthier men practiced polygamy. Cultural activities included the arts, music and dancing, and storytelling.

Many African cultures believed in one Great Spirit but also in many lesser spiritual beings. Often the people believed that trees, rocks, and other elements of nature had spirits (this belief is called animism). In coping with everyday life and in trying to please the Great Spirit, the people would seek help from lesser spiritual beings and from their ancestors, who were thought to be closer to the Great Spirit.

Separating fact from fiction with regard to ancient civilizations is difficult. Anthropologists and other scientists often have strong presuppositions that cause them to interpret evidence in certain ways or to announce what they believe to be the truth with little or no evidence at all. Academic speculation gets picked up as scientific conclusions and then repeated as assured facts. Experts sometimes have a hard time admitting that they do not know the answers. The information about ancient cultures in this lesson is based on what scientists believe to be true at the time of this writing. Evidence may be sketchy or non-existent, and future discoveries (or theories) may change what is commonly believed today.

North and South America

The traditional understanding of how people first came to the Americas is that they walked over a land bridge that connected Russian Siberia with Alaska. This land bridge was later submerged after the ice from an Ice Age melted. However, this is only a guess. No evidence exists to prove this theory. No one has ever crossed the Bering Strait, which now separates Alaska and Siberia. A few scholars have begun to speculate that the first Americans came by boat. In simple truth, we do not know.



However they got here, the first Americans found a wide diversity of geography and weather; and tribes spread across two continents to inhabit the land. The Eskimos or Inuit people hunted and fished in the area of Alaska and lived in simple houses. Igloos or ice huts were used only on hunting expeditions. In what became the southwestern United States, tribes took up farming as

well as hunting and used dried mud to build adobe dwellings. Nomadic tribes of the upper Great Plains followed the herds of buffalo and other wild animals. The Iroquois and other tribes in what became the northeastern United States built longhouses of wooden frames covered with animal hides or brush. Tribes often moved as a group, but sometimes they divided. The Cherokee of what became the southeastern United States are thought to have moved from the northeast.

North American tribes generally lived in small villages. The tribes that inhabited Central and South America, by contrast, built great cities and developed complex governmental systems. Archaeologists believe that much of what these peoples built had to do with their religious observances.

The Olmec nation flourished in southern Mexico around 1200 BC. They build large pyramids and carved huge stone faces. The Olmec developed a hieroglyphic writing system, a fairly advanced counting system, and an accurate calendar. The Olmecs disappeared around the first century AD for reasons unknown. They might have migrated to another place, been defeated in war, or been wiped out by disease.

Guatemala was the home of the Maya people. They eventually spread into southern Mexico and other parts of Central America. The polytheistic Mayans build large cities that included pyramid structures, and many cities had a recreation field where games were played (the nature and purpose of the games are still matters of speculation). Mayan farming was helped by the irrigation systems they built. They followed precise calendars and used a numbering system that included zero. The Mayans declined around 900 AD.

The Aztec arose around 1200 AD in Mexico. Their capital was Tenochtitlan, near the site of present day Mexico City. The Aztecs were a warlike people that conquered other tribes and demanded payments of tribute. When Spanish explorers landed in the early 1500s, they found allies among the subject tribes who were only too ready to throw off Aztec rule. Aztec religion included human sacrifices made to their sun god.

The Inca people inhabited the mountainous regions of western South America, including what is now Peru. Evidence suggests their presence from around 2000 BC. The Inca were polytheistic but especially worshiped the sun god. They built temples and roads and had advanced medical practices.



Inca city of Machu Picchu in the Andes Mountains of Peru

European Tribes

The word barbarian was used by the Greeks to describe people who spoke a different language and had different cultural ways (the word expressed what the non-Greek language sound like to them: bar-bar, or jibberish). It did not necessarily mean that the non-Greeks were less intelligent, although that is probably what the Greeks thought. The term is now generally used to describe people who have not developed a civilization as advanced as that of the person using the term (in that person's eyes).



Stonehenge

One of the earliest evidences of human society in Europe is Stonehenge, the mysterious circle of stones in southern England. Apparently it was built in stages until about 1550 BC. Experts believe the huge stones were quarried in Wales over 200 miles away and shipped by rafts and dragged on sleds or over logs to the site. Some stones were set erect with lintels placed across pairs of them. The motivation for building Stonehenge and its purpose once it was completed have been the subject of much speculation. It could possibly have been arranged to mark the summer solstice. It was definitely not intended as a site for Druid worship, since the Druid cult did not appear until long after Stonehenge was built. The site is near another ancient town and fort called Sarum and the more modern city of Salisbury.

The nomadic tribes of Europe are thought to have come from the grassy steppes of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Some tribes migrated south (into Greece, for instance) and southeast (perhaps to India), while others moved west into Europe. Linguists and



Arthur may have been a Celtic king of the sixth century AD in southwestern England who fought the Saxon invaders. His reputation became lionized in many legends, and Arthur became the national mythical hero of England.

anthropologists believe that language and other similarities in these widely divergent groups suggest a common origin. As a result, many ancient peoples and their languages are called Indo-European. Some of these peoples include the Celts of western Europe and the Germanic tribes of northern Europe. The contact and interchange between the tribes of western and northern Europe and the Mediterranean cultures of Greece and Rome gave rise to what we call Western Civilization.

The Celts (pronounced with a hard c; the origin of the word is Greek) lived in central and western Europe and migrated into Britain by 500 BC. Other Celts settled in France (called Gaul), and a group from there migrated to the area in Asia Minor that became known as Galatia. Still other Celts settled in Spain. The Celts were fierce and cruel warriors but also produced refined artwork and craftwork. The Druids were a Celtic religious cult.

Julius Caesar led an invasion of Roman forces into Celtic Britain in 55 BC and eventually added much of the island to the Roman Empire. The Romans founded the town of Londinium (later known as London) at a previously-inhabited site on the Thames River. The Romans occupied Britain until the threat of barbarian conquest in Italy caused the Romans to abandon the island about 400 AD.



Map of Saxon Britain

The Venerable Bede (673-735 AD) was an English Catholic monk who is called the father of English history. He never left the area around his home in northeastern England, but he was one of the most learned men in Europe. Bede knew Hebrew, Greek, and Latin and wrote about natural history, poetry, Bible translation, and Biblical exposition as well as history.

His *Ecclesiastical History*, published about 731, is still highly respected as an accurate description of the history of England from the Roman invasion to about 600 AD. Bede's purpose was to emphasize the arrival and spread of Christianity in England. He understood the value of history for those who want to serve the Lord, as reflected in this extract from a message to King Ceolwulf regarding his work:

And I rejoice greatly at the sincerity and zeal, with which you not only diligently give ear to hear the words of Holy Scripture, but also industriously take care to become acquainted with the actions and sayings of former men of renown, especially of our own nation. For if history relates good things of good men, the attentive hearer is excited to imitate that which is good; or if it recounts evil things of wicked persons, none the less the conscientious and devout hearer or reader, shunning that which is hurtful and wrong, is the more earnestly fired to perform those things which he knows to be good, and worthy of the service of God. And as you have carefully marked this, you are desirous that the said history should be more fully made known to yourself, and to those over whom the Divine Authority has appointed you governor, from your great regard to the common good.

The Saxons were one of the Germanic tribes that moved across the weakening Roman Empire in northern Europe. They invaded Britain in the fifth century AD after British forces left. The Saxons pushed the Celts west and north, so that the Celts came to inhabit what is now Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and the southwestern tip of England called Cornwall. Scots and Picts also lived in what is now Scotland.

Some time later invaders from Scandinavia, especially Denmark, swept across England. These were the Angles and Jutes. By 890 AD the main part of the island of Britain was called Angleland or England. Their language was known as English. As the Saxons and Angles blended together, they originated what are called the Anglo-Saxon people. In the 800s AD Vikings from Norway and Denmark launched repeated invasions of the island and seized control of some areas, especially in the north of England. The last Saxon king, Harold, was killed at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 when Norman invaders (from Normandy in northern France) accomplished the last successful foreign invasion of England.

*There is no distinction between Greek and Jew,
circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian,
slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.
Colossians 3:11*

Bible Study Question

How might you try to help pagan peoples see the truth of the one God and His Savior Jesus Christ?

Grammar Point – Parallel Thoughts

Parallel thoughts should be written in grammatically parallel terms *Incorrect: Hiking is more pleasant than to jog. Correct: Hiking is more pleasant than jogging. (or) To hike is more pleasant than to jog.*

Reading

- Read the excerpt from *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (In Their Words, pages 36-39).*

Lesson 39 – Government, Culture, and Science in Ancient China

The raw materials that produced the ancient Chinese civilization were those God created. These people made in His image used the soils, the underground metals, plants, and other raw materials of the land to create a civilization with beautiful art, amazing scientific knowledge, and practical tools for living.

Government

The Chou Dynasty had a feudal system, with nobles, peasants, and slaves. During the Ch'in Dynasty the land was divided into administrative districts. Writing, weights, measures, and coinage were standardized. Coins had been in round shapes but also in knife and spade shapes. Government was based on the Legalism taught by Shi Huangdi's main advisor, Li Si, who believed people were basically bad and had to be forced to obey. Many roads, canal and irrigation systems, and the Great Wall were built during Shi Huangdi's rule. His palace had 1,000 bedrooms. He changed bedrooms to ward off being assassinated (he never was).

The Han Dynasty took a census in 2 AD and determined the population to be 59,594,978. The highest officials were mandarins. Each emperor had a bureaucracy of government officials and civil servants. The capital was Han China. More than two-thirds of the capital's land was made up of royal grounds which included palaces and tall pavilions for the emperor and the nobles. During the Han dynasty, bamboo bridges were built over some of the gorges of the Himalayas.



Round coins with a square hole go back to about 500 BC. in China.

The round shape may represent heaven, with the square center representing earth.

Art

Most Chinese artists and architects worked for the emperor. Rulers required that the art preserve Chinese traditions. Chinese artists were highly trained and worked in large workshops. Knowledge was passed from generation to generation. Bronze casts were made during the Shang dynasty (c. 1600-1122 BC.). During the Chou dynasty (c. 1045-256 BC) bronze vessels sometimes had inlays of gold or semiprecious stones. Often they were cast to commemorate war victories or land grants. They usually had long inscriptions of what they

commemorated. Other art forms of the Chou period include paintings on silk, wood sculpture, lacquerwork, and glazed ceramics. Written history of the Chou period indicates that royal homes were adorned with large portraits of emperors and painted murals. During the Chou dynasty, bronze house decorations were often given as wedding gifts. Bronze mirrors were popular during this period.

Archaeologists have extensively studied art from the Ch'in dynasty (221-210 BC). When Emperor Ch'in Shi Huangdi died, he was buried in a huge burial mound in the Shanxi province. The burial mound was discovered by Chinese peasants digging a well. The first pit was first excavated in 1974. Inside were 6000 terra-cotta figures, representing a real army in battle formation. The figures represent officers, charioteers, archers, and young foot soldiers and were designed to look natural. The soldiers' bodies were baked in a kiln. They have distinct facial expressions. The size of the figures reflects their rank, with the commanders



Terra cotta soldiers in Xi'an, China

being the tallest at 6 feet 5 inches. The shortest figures are 5 feet 8 inches. The soldiers carry weapons and wear uniforms showing their rank. There are horses in various poses and six chariots. Originally the terra-cotta army was painted with bright colors. In 1976 another pit was excavated. It had 1,400 warriors with horses in a square battle formation and included 64 chariots. The figures were divided into groups. The facial expressions vary greatly from the first pit. In 1980 a third pit was discovered with one chariot, a few figures, and weapons. A fourth pit is a bare room that was perhaps never completed.

During the Han dynasty (202 BC - 220 AD), grave architecture included vaults and supporting columns. They were furnished with miniature objects that were usually glazed or colorfully painted ceramic. Typical miniatures included a home, a barnyard, pets, servants, and assorted objects from daily life. A model of a rotary winnowing fan found in ancient tombs was made of pottery and had miniature working parts. A beautiful and very realistic bronze horse sculpture has been uncovered at a tomb in Wu-Wei.

The oldest representation of a ship's rudder in the world was a pottery model of a Chinese ship found in a first century AD tomb. The model is about twenty-two inches long. A slung axial rudder is clearly visible. This type of rudder can be raised and lowered by rope tackle or chains, so that the rudder can be raised in shallow water. This description indicates the detail of ancient Chinese art.

Prince Liu Sheng and his wife Dou Wan died during the Han dynasty. Their grave included lacquers, silks, pottery, and bronze. Some of the bronze was gilded and some was inlaid with gold. Both bodies wore jade suits, each made with more than 2,000 pieces of wafer-thin jade, attached with gold, silver, and bronze thread.

Farming

Millet. A common food in northern China was millet. It grows well where the weather is cold and dry. The Chinese pictogram for millet is common in Chinese writing. Written together the pictograms for millet and mouth mean good. The combined pictograms of millet and man mean harvest or year. Kings thought they were descended from a god, the Millet Ruler, and that heaven gave them permission to rule.

Row Crops. Western farmers began planting in rows in the eighteenth century. The Chinese were planting in rows by the sixth century BC. It is discussed in Master Lu's *Spring and Autumn Annals*, which says the crops will not interfere with each other's growth. It recommends straight lines so the wind will pass gently through.



Wheat

Plows. By the fourth century BC, a sturdy, square-framed, heavy plow was being promoted by the Chinese government. The strut could be adjusted for plowing depth.

Wheelbarrow. The earliest depiction of a European wheelbarrow dates from 1220 AD in a window at Chartres Cathedral in France, but Chinese descriptions of the wheelbarrow date from the first century BC. A frieze relief in a tomb-shrine in Szechuan province dates from around 118 AD. Sometimes Chinese wheelbarrows had sails.

Horseback Riding. The padded saddle for riding on horseback and the breastplate harness were invented during the Han dynasty.

Paper and Writing

Tsai Lun was an official in a Chinese court. He is given credit for inventing paper around 110 AD. He found that most plant fibers could be ground up and soaked in water to make paper. By the mid-100s there were already many paper mills producing yellow paper. The Chinese kept the art of papermaking a secret. Europe did not find out about it until over 1000 years later.

Hot Air Balloons and Paper Lanterns

The Chinese used eggshells to make miniature hot-air balloons. A book written in the second century BC, *The Ten Thousand Infallible Arts of the Prince of Huai-Nan* mentions eggshell balloons. To make them, they removed the contents of the egg and then ignited a bit of

mugwort tinder inside the hole. Mugwort is a common weed with long, dry stalks, used for tinder and to make incense sticks.

During the Han dynasty the military used paper lanterns as signals. Chinese paper lanterns continue to be important in Chinese culture. Chinese New Year celebrations include the paper lantern festival. They have also been used as tiny hot-air balloons.

Clothing

Chinese weavers were making silk fabric around 1500 BC. Around 200 BC, women in southern China were wearing a robe made of patterned silk that was wrapped in a spiral around the body.

In the Shang dynasty (1726-1122 BC), soldiers wore heavy armor made of bamboo, wood, and padded cloth. Around 200 BC soldiers wore tunics, trousers, and metal armor.

The Abacus



Modern abacus

The Chinese developed the modern form of the Suen Poon, or abacus, with beads on rods. The abacus was mentioned by Xu Yue around 190 AD. The word abacus may have originated from the Semitic word *abq* which means sand and later from the Greek word *abax* or *abakon* (table or tablet). This calculating tool is still used extensively in China. In speed competitions the proficient abacus user can beat an electronic calculator user at addition and subtraction.

Medicine

The Chinese medical textbook, *Nei Ching*, was compiled by Emperor Huang Ti sometime between 479 and 300 BC. Most ancient Chinese medicine was based on this book. The Chinese treated wounds, fractured bones, and allergies. They treated anemia with iron. They asked patients about their symptoms, diet, previous illnesses, and checked their pulse. The Chinese understood elements of blood circulation by the second century BC. It is discussed in the *Yellow Emperor's Manual of Corporeal Medicine*. During the Han dynasty the Chinese were practicing acupuncture.

Technology

Drilling. The Chinese could drill to a depth of 4800 feet by the first century BC. Their derricks rose as high as 180 feet. They used cast iron drill bits and bamboo cables. A hemp rope can hold 750 pounds per square inch, but a bamboo cable can hold four tons per square inch.

Parachute. The Chinese historian, Suma Ch'ien completed his Historical Records of China around 90 BC. He described a parachute legend that could have dated centuries before. In the legend Emperor Shun tied many large cone-shaped straw hats together and jumped from a large granary tower which was on fire.

Seismograph. The court astronomer Chang Heng invented a seismograph during the Han dynasty. It was a richly ornamented copper cauldron six feet in diameter with eight evenly-spaced bronze dragon heads circling its midsection. Each dragon held a ball in its movable mouth. Below the dragon heads were eight toads with open mouths. When an earthquake occurred, a dragon mouth would open and drop its ball into the frog mouth below. The direction of the dragon's head thus affected would indicate in which direction from the capital the earthquake had occurred.

The Han government bought surplus farm products and kept them in warehouses for emergencies like earthquakes. They had canal systems and roads for transporting the supplies. Before the invention of the seismograph, they had to rely on messengers from distant provinces to let the central government know about a quake; but this took too long. With the seismograph, the government could send aid as soon as an earthquake occurred.

*Let the glory of the Lord endure forever;
let the Lord be glad in His works; he looks at the earth,
and it trembles; he touches the mountains, and they smoke.
Psalm 104:31-32*

Bible Study Question

What inventions have helped spread the knowledge of God's word?

Grammar Point – Misplaced Modifiers

Modifiers should be so placed that the meaning is obvious. *Unclear: We saw a man riding horse wearing a cowboy hat. Clear: We saw a man wearing a cowboy hat riding a horse.*

Reading

- Read the book of Jonah.

Lesson 40 – Bible Study: God’s Love for the Nations – The Story of Jonah

The book of Jonah is more than just a big fish story. It is a lesson about how much God loves the nations of the world and how difficult it is sometimes for God’s people to have that love themselves.

God commissioned Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh, capital of the heathen nation of Assyria, because He knew of their sins (Jonah 1:1-2). A reference to Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25 places his ministry in the first half of the eighth century BC (approximately 790 to 760



Assyrian city

BC). The Assyrians were known for their cruelty in war. Within a few decades, they would destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel and carry many of its people into captivity. Perhaps God wanted to give them a chance to change their ways in order to spare Israel.

However, Jonah did not want to preach to Nineveh because he hated the Assyrians. Rather than

head east to Nineveh, Jonah headed west and boarded a ship at the port city of Joppa destined for Tarshish (in Asia Minor, later known as Tarsus, home of Paul) in an attempt to run away from God (Jonah 1:3). The Lord sent a great storm against the ship, so great that the experienced crew feared for their lives. They learned that Jonah was the reason for their peril. Jonah claimed to fear the Lord (Jonah 1:9), but he certainly did not act like he did. At Jonah’s request, they threw him into the ocean, calling on the Lord as they did. When the sea became calm, the men feared the Lord and made a sacrifice and took vows (Jonah 1:4-16). The crew evidently were pagans, but they called upon the Lord and sacrificed to Him. The heathens were showing more faith in God than the Israelite Jonah was.

God appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah. He was inside the fish for three days and three nights. While there, he repented and called upon the Lord; and the Lord caused the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land (1:17-2:10). God renewed His call to Jonah, and this time Jonah obeyed -- barely. All the preaching we have of Jonah is one sentence of eight words, and he didn’t even go all the way through the city. But even at that extremely short sermon, the pagan people of Nineveh repented, from the king down to the commoners. They believed, fasted, and put on sackcloth (a symbol of mourning and anguish). The king issued a

proclamation calling on every Ninevite to call on God in the hope that He would relent from His plan to destroy the city, and God did so (Jonah 3:1-10).

Consider the mercies that God showed. He spoke to Jonah. When Jonah ran away, God allowed him to find a ship. God protected Jonah through the storm and in the belly of the fish. By His merciful warning, the people of Nineveh repented and called on the Lord. Jonah, on the other hand, was furious. He had shown insensitivity by refusing to go to Nineveh the first time God told him to, by being asleep on the boat during the storm, by not going through the entire city of Nineveh, and by his minimal sermon to the Ninevites. Now Jonah did not like the fact that the Ninevites were repenting. He hated those heathens and wanted them shown no mercy.

Jonah addressed his frustrations to God. He had not wanted to go to Nineveh because he knew that God was gracious and compassionate. In other words, he couldn't stand the



Relief from Nineveh

thought of God being merciful towards the pagans of Nineveh; and he had not wanted to be a part of it. In fact, he said that he would rather die than see a city filled with humble, repentant, God-fearing pagans. God replied by asking a question: "Do you have good reason to be angry?" (Jonah 4:2-4). In the following scene God showed Jonah that he didn't have a good reason.

Once again God showed mercy to Jonah, this time by appointing a plant to provide him with shade. This pleased Jonah, but he became frustrated again when a worm attacked the plant and caused it to wither. Once again, Job wanted to die. The Lord asked Jonah again if he had good reason to be angry, this time about the plant; and Jonah said that he did (Jonah 4:5-9). Then God came to the point of the story. Jonah cared about the plant, for which he had done nothing and which was here and gone in two days. Was it not right, by contrast, for God to care about the tens of thousands of human beings in Nineveh whom he had created in His image and who were so spiritually lost that they did not know their right hand from their left? God even cared about the animals of Nineveh more than Jonah cared about the people of Nineveh (Jonah 4:10-11).

In the story of Jonah, God showed His love for pagan people and tried to teach Jonah to do the same. Jonah had received blessing upon blessing from God, not least of which was his being born into the nation of Israel, God's chosen people. The prophet was extremely selfish and uncaring about others. He wanted God to love him, but he did not understand that accepting God's love had consequences. We cannot put limits on God's love. God loves His people, and He loves all nations. Our purpose should not be to try to shrink God's love down to the size of our own hearts, but to grow in our love to become more like God.

The nations of the world were formed by God when He scattered the people from the Tower of Babel. Paul said that God made all the nations from Adam and determined their times and places of habitation (Acts 17:26). Several times in the Old Testament, God says that all the earth belongs to Him (Exodus 9:29, 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14; Job 41:11). Even the cattle on a thousand hills (held sacred by the people of India) belong to God (Psalm 50:10).

This does not mean that God loves or tolerates the pagan practices of the nations. He wanted the idolatrous nations of Canaan completely driven out of the land so that they would not be a snare to the Israelites when they conquered the Promised Land (Joshua 1:6). God ridiculed the idea of a man cutting down a tree, making a fire with part of it, and bowing down to the rest of it as an idol (Isaiah 44:14-17; see also Habakkuk 2:18-20). The Lord also ridiculed pagan fishermen who would worship the net they used to catch fish (Habakkuk 1:15-16).

Three of the Minor Prophets addressed the sins of Gentile nations (Jonah, Nahum, and Obadiah). Jesus came and died because God loves the world (John 3:16). The Lord issued the Great Commission because God wants all men to be saved (Mark 16:15-16, 1 Timothy 2:4). Early church traditions held that the apostles went to various parts of the world preaching the gospel. Thomas, for instance, was said to have gone to Persia and India. Andrew,

according to tradition, was crucified in Achaia (the district around Corinth in Greece).



Drawing of Assyrian sculpture

Almost all of the nations of antiquity were pagan. Many of the people in the world today do not know God. This does not mean that God does not love those people. As we read about customs and beliefs that seem strange to us, we should see the religious error for what it is but love the people and want them to know the salvation that comes from the one true God in Jesus Christ. We should not think of ourselves as superior. All that we have has been given to us, and we are not as good stewards of the resources and opportunities we have been given as we should be. If we grow in our love for other people and see them as God sees them, we will hurt for them in their lost state and do more to help them know the grace of Jesus.

*Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and
the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.*

Deuteronomy 10:14