Strangers, aliens, foreigners, and gentiles…oh my!

1. Genesis 11:1-9 and 35:10. From who did the nation of Israel arise? How are aliens, foreigners, strangers, and gentiles associated to the biblical history of humanity?

> Before the Tower of Babel, humanity was of one race and language. After the Tower of Babel, humanity was dispersed with different languages, which introduced the concept of "foreigners"; one that may be of a different racial, ethnic, clan, family, or linguistic group than the native population. The Hebrew word for "foreigner" means "outsider."

> The Bible also uses other terms similar to "foreigner". "Alien" was a term used within the context of an immigrant. A long-term resident immigrant was considered a "resident alien" and a temporary settler was considered a "temporary alien" or "stranger".

> After God changed Jacob's name to Israel, "gentile" was another term for "foreigner" that referred to anyone who was not a Jew.

2. Was salvation possible for foreigners, aliens, strangers, and Gentiles in the Old Testament? Study Genesis 4:26; 5:22-24; 6:8-9; 14:18; 17:10-13, Exodus 12:43-49, Numbers 15:13-16, Leviticus 24:21-22, and Ruth 1:15-17.

> Yes, regardless of one's ethnicity, salvation was possible for all who have faith in the one true God. Before the Abrahamic Covenant, God had fellowship with non-Jewish men (Gen 5:22-24; 6:8-9; and 14:18). Foreigners who lived amidst the Hebrews during the Mosaic Covenant could either live by the Mosaic Law set for foreigners (Gen 17:10-13, Ex 12:43-49, Num 15:13-16, and Lev 24:21-22) or become a Jew and live fully by the Law (Ruth 1:15-17).

3. Study carefully Leviticus 25:23, Hebrews 11:8-16, 1 Peter 2:9-11, 1 Kings 8:41-43, and Isaiah 2:1-4. Who's an alien in God's eyes? What role does the nation of Israel have towards aliens?

> In Lev 25:23, God is speaking to Moses and informs him that the Hebrew nation is an alien in the Promised Land (Heb 11:8-16). In 1 Peter 2:9-11, the Church is considered an alien and stranger. In God's eyes, all believers, whether Jewish, foreigner, alien, stranger, or Gentile, are all "aliens" on earth; citizenship and home is in heaven.

> Through the Abrahamic Covenant, God chose the nation of Israel as his royal priesthood. In I Kings 8:41-43, as Solomon's temple is being inaugurated, Solomon prays that the temple be a house of prayer for all on earth. In Isa 2:1-4, Isaiah prophesizes that, in the last days, all nations will come to Jerusalem to learn and live by the Lord and find peace. Thus, Israel's role, in gratitude of God's undeserved love of election, is to be used as a means for the salvation of all "aliens" (including itself).

The Old Testament and race
A review of the covenants reveals that God chose the Hebrew nation as His royal priesthood and through whom the Messiah would come. Yet God does not play favorites nor chooses one based on righteousness; He chooses because He loves. And while He chose the Israelites, He also blessed Gentiles like Ishmael, Rahab, and Ruth.

The New Testament and race
In the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, Jesus Christ was sent to minister to the Jewish nation; however, his ministry did not exclude anyone. He healed and witnessed to Gentiles as recorded in the Gospels. Today, because of the New Covenant and the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, Christians make up the royal priesthood with the mandate of the Great Commission to all nations.

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