

We continue this exciting series devoted to the differences in Paul before and after Acts 28 with special emphasis on the salvation of the Gentiles during the Acts period. Yes, I changed the series title and don't forget previous lessons are on this link www.bibleunderstanding.com/pastissues.htm Numbers 33-43.

We are examining the phrase "the fullness of the gentiles" as found in this passage;

Rom 11:25 For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until **the fullness of the nations** has come in.

To understand it we need to know its context and the Scriptures have shown that the salvation of the Gentiles during Acts was according to the following facts. Gentiles were saved during Acts because their salvation was;

- 1. Anticipated historically.*
- 2. Foretold by the Prophets.*
- 3. Secondary to Paul's ministry to Israel.*
- 4. After the Jews rejected the message in specific locations.*
- 5. Because Israel was partially blinded and stumbling.*
- 6. To make Israel jealous.*
- 7. According to prophecy which anticipated Israel's restoration.*
- 8. Because God was being faithful to Israel.*

The fullness of the Gentiles or Nations must be understood in the light of the above list and we shall find it is found in prophecy, not mystery.

Gentiles were saved during the Acts period because God was being faithful to all His promises to Israel's fathers, please compare Gen.12:1-3 and Gals.3:8.

The post Acts dispensation of the Mystery is not God being faithful to any promise made to Israel. Thus the fullness of the Gentiles cannot be the present truth of these letters. It cannot be said that Israel were partially blinded until Paul received the post Acts truth of the "fullness of the Gentiles", for Romans says when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in the deliverer would come out of Zion. Whatever the "fullness of the Gentiles" might be, it relates to Jerusalem, the earthly purposes of God not the heavenly places of Ephesians.

This lesson we shall discover that a similar term to "the fullness of the gentiles" was used by someone very close to Paul, one who stayed with him until the end; Doctor Luke. Since we are instructed to compare Scripture with Scripture we shall rejoice in the explanation the comparison of the Word brings.

However, before considering Luke's Gospel, let us sum up some important features which refresh our memory as to the context of the phrase "the fullness of the Gentiles".

In Acts 15:14-18, when James was harmonizing the salvation of the Gentiles during Acts with Scripture, he quoted Amos which speaks of the land and God who will "turn back the captivity of My People Israel", see Amos 9:14. But Amos also warns that the "sinners of My People shall die by the sword", see Amos 9:10. Which "sword" would destroy the sinners? Look at these words spoken by the Lord through this prophet;

Amo 9:4 And if they go into captivity before their enemies, I will command the sword there, and it shall kill them; and I will set My eyes on them for evil, and not for good. (Compare Luke 21:24 below).

God had used Gentile nations to punish Israel in the past (Jer.1:14-16, Is.10) and when Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38 he was using a prophecy which also spoke of a northern army of Gentiles that would enter the land as God's instruments of punishment;

Hab 1:5 **Look among the nations, and behold and wonder marvelously; for I will work a work in your days which you will not believe, not even if it is declared to you.**

Hab 1:6-7 For lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, the bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land to possess homes not their own. He is terrible and fearful; his judgment and his majesty comes forth from Himself.

This verse from Habakkuk is the very word of warning that Paul uses to the rejecting Jews in Acts 13:41 so while the prophecy had a partial past fulfillment, Paul knew of another northern army that would be sent to destroy “the sinners of the land”. This was Paul’s Acts period warning to the Jews, destruction by the sword. But how could a Gentile army be “the fullness of the Gentiles”?

In Romans 10:11-13 Paul, speaking of the salvation of both Jew and Gentile during Acts, quotes Isaiah 28:16 and Joel 2:32. Both Isaiah and Joel speak of God’s judgment on the sinners of Israel and Joel speaks of the northern army prophesied in the future “the Day of The Lord”, see Joel 2.

When Paul used prophecy as his authority to turn to the Gentiles in Acts 13:47 he quoted Isaiah 49:6. Isaiah speaks about “the Day of the Lord” and the terrible judgments which would befall the sinners of Israel in the days just prior to the coming of the Lord, please note the harmonies with Joel in this passage:

Isa 13:4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, .. Jehovah of Hosts gathers an army for the battle.

Isa 13:5 They come from a far country, ..Jehovah and the weapons of His indignation, to destroy all the land.

Isa 13:6 How! For **the day of Jehovah (the day of the Lord)** is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

Isa 13:8 and they shall be afraid. Pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them. They shall be in **pain like a woman who travails**. ..

Isa 13:9 Behold, the day of Jehovah comes, cruel and with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land waste; and He shall **destroy its sinners out of it**.

The reader might like to compare Joel 2:11, Amos 5:13, Zep.1:7, 2:2-3, Ma.4:5 and this passage also written in the Acts period;

1Th 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need that I write to you.

1Th 5:2 For you yourselves know accurately that **the day of the Lord** comes like a thief in the night.

1Th 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety! Then sudden destruction comes on them, **as travail upon a woman with child. And they shall not escape**.

Is my reader beginning to consider that the Gentiles of Romans 11:25 might not refer to the saved Gentiles but rather the armies used by God as punishment on the sinners of the land prior to the return of the Lord? God’s wrath is mentioned in prophecy many times.

Let us turn to the Lord Himself for understanding. In Matt.24:3 the disciples had asked the Lord “when shall these things be? And what *shall be* the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?” In His reply the Lord mentioned wars in verse 6 and the “abomination of desolation” of Daniel in verse 15. Following the setting up of the image in the holy place is the great day of Jacob’s trouble, the tribulation. After that, THEN the Lord returns. Please follow the order of events here;

Mat 24:15 Therefore **when** you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand).

Mat 24:21, 29, 30 for **then** shall be great tribulation, ... **And immediately after** the tribulation of those days,... **then** the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens. **And then** all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and **they shall see** the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory.

Despite the traditions we have heard, I think the Lord would know the order of events and Paul is in complete harmony with Him if we simply believe and follow the same order in 2Thess.2. Now let us turn to Luke and his account of those details the Lord provides in answer to the disciples’ question. Please note carefully the order of events in this quote and those following from Luke;

Luk 21:20 And when you see Jerusalem compassed with **armies**, then know that its **destruction** has come.

Luk 21:22 For these are the **days of vengeance**, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

In this series of events BEFORE the Lord’s return we have “armies” as per Isaiah, Joel etc, “destruction of Jerusalem” and “days of vengeance”, again all according to prophecy.

Now, in this context of enemy armies, Jerusalem’s destruction and vengeance, let us compare Luke’s use of a very similar phrase to Paul’s in Romans 11:25 as follows:

Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the sword’s edge. And shall be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be **trodden down by the nations until the times of the nations is fulfilled**.

Here is Paul's expression again;

Rom 11:25 For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the **fullness of the nations** has come in.

What event follows these times of the Gentiles fulfillment or the fullness of the Gentiles In both Paul and Luke? Let us compare the Scriptures;

Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the sword's edge. And shall be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the nations until the times of the nations is fulfilled.

Luk 21:25 "And there shall be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations,.

Luk 21:27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Rom 11:25 For I do not desire you to be ignorant, brothers, of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer shall come out of Zion, and He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

Both inspired writers after speaking of times, Gentiles and fulfillment or fullness embrace the coming of the Lord to the earth.

The fullness of the Gentiles cannot relate to the post Acts truths of Ephesians and Colossians which have nothing to do with the "deliverer coming out of Zion" or the "son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory".

Next lesson we shall connect the "fullness of the Gentiles" with the "man of sin" and "the abomination of desolation". The fullness of the Gentiles might refer to the final Gentile control over Israel prior to the Lord's return. In other words, it might refer to the final Gentile enemy as prophesied in Daniel.