

This series of email lessons has focused on the salvation of Gentiles during the Acts period for very important reasons. As we know, most denominations traditionally believe that “the church” started at Pentecost and Acts is a history of the “early church”. However, as we have observed the Bible study principles of testing things that differ (Phils.1:9-10a) and right division (2Tim.2:15) we can’t ignore the fact that the Acts period may not be as tradition suggests. We have found that Acts is the end of the ages, the closing years of Israel’s history and not the beginning of any new calling previously “hidden in God”.

During the Acts period Paul preached to the Jew first then the Gentiles and proclaimed the promise made to the fathers which included Christ raised to sit on David’s throne, see Acts 13:32-35. We must not conclude that just because Gentiles were saved during the Acts period that our calling today had started.

Our recent lessons have shown from Scripture that the inclusion of the Gentiles during the Acts period was;

1. Anticipated historically.
2. Foretold by the Prophets.
3. Secondary to Paul’s ministry to Israel.
4. Initiated after the rejection of the message by the Jews in specific locations.
5. Because Israel was partially blinded and stumbling. Israel’s partial blindness was an act of mercy so that God could have mercy on them all at their restoration which Paul saw as “life from the dead”.
6. To make Israel envious so that Israel might respond to the gospel; turn back to their God who would then turn back to them in faithfulness to all His promises. Paul promoted his Acts period Apostleship to the Gentiles in hope of saving some of them.
7. According to prophecy which anticipated Israel’s restoration.

We now turn to a verse in Romans 11 which has caused lots of distress and confusion within dispensational circles. It has taken us some time to arrive here, but we had to set the context of the Acts period. What is the “fullness of the Gentiles (nations)” as found in this verse;

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.

Does “the fullness of nations” mean the church which is His body? Does it mean the truth of Ephesians? Does this mean the number of Gentiles needed to save Israel; to provoke her to salvation?

Friends, our only answer can be the one which is in harmony with the context of the passage, and the dispensational setting of the Acts period. Both of these are the same, the restoration of Israel and her salvation. Please review the 7 dispensational settings regarding the salvation of the Gentiles before we return to last lesson for some revision.

Last lesson we found the Gentiles were saved according to prophecy but not only so, prophecy which foretold Israel’s restoration not the introduction of anything new and previously hidden. This is a very clear guide to our answer from the Word of God.

Here are the two prophecies used by James and Paul when the salvation of the Gentiles during the Acts period was in view. We revisit these adding verses around the quoted passage to set the prophetic context. In each case, Israel’s restoration is in view, not the beginning of “the church”. Here is James in Acts 15.

Act 15:14 Even as Simon has declared how God at the first visited the nations to take out of them a people for His name.

Act 15:15 And the words of the Prophets agree to this; as it is written,

Amo 9:10 All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, who say, The evil shall not draw near, or come in front of us.

Amo 9:11 In that day I will raise up the booth of David that has fallen, and close up its breaks; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old;

Amo 9:12 so that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the nations on whom My name is called, says Jehovah who is doing this.

Amo 9:13 Behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that the plowman and the reaper shall draw near, the treader of grapes, and he who draws along the seed. And the mountains will drip must, and all the hills will be dissolved.

Amo 9:14 And I will turn back the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall build the cities which are desolate, and they shall live in them. And they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine. They shall also make gardens and eat their fruit.

Notice, the salvation of the Gentiles during Acts was according to Amos where the Lord would punish the sinners of Israel, but at the same time restore the captivity of Israel. This prophecy will not allow the view that the Gentiles were

saved during the Acts period to lead Israel by the hand into the church which is His Body. The restoration of Israel is the theme of Amos 9, and if it's the theme of Amos 9, then it is the dispensational setting of James and Acts 15.

Last lesson we also looked at Paul and his prophetic authority to turn to the Gentiles in Acts 13 and we jump from Paul straight back to the prophet to see the dispensational setting of Acts 13.

Act 13:46 But speaking boldly, Paul and Barnabas said, It was necessary for the Word of God to be spoken to you first. (Jew first) But since indeed you put it far from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the nations (Gentiles second).

Act 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

Isa 49:5 And now, says Jehovah who formed Me from the womb *to be* His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel is not gathered, yet I shall be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah, and My God shall be My strength.

Isa 49:6 And He said, It is but a little *thing* that You should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to bring back the preserved ones of Israel; **I will also give You for a light to the nations, to be My salvation to the end of the earth.**

Isa 49:7 So says Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation hates, the servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise, rulers also shall worship, because of Jehovah who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You.

Isa 49:8 So says Jehovah, in a favorable time I replied to You, and in a day of salvation I have helped You; and I will preserve You, and give You for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause them to inherit the wasted inheritances;

If Paul's authority to turn to the Gentiles is in harmony with a prophetic passage about the restoration of Israel, how can we be in disharmony with Paul, Isaiah, and the Holy Spirit, to think that gentiles were saved during Acts to lead Israel into the church of today? It is very difficult to stand against tradition, but it is very profitable to stand with the rightly divided Word of Truth.

The Gentiles were saved during the Acts period according to prophetic passages which clearly foretell the restoration of Israel. Can my readers see Paul's wonderful doxology in Romans 11 which is also praising God for Israel's restoration?

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

Rom 11:33 O *the* depth of *the* riches both of *the* wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

Rom 11:34 **For who has known the mind of *the* Lord, or who became His counselor?**

This prophetic doxology of Romans 11 includes a quote from Isaiah 40:

Isa 40:13 Who has directed the Spirit of Jehovah, and what man taught Him counsel?

Isa 40:14 With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and made known the way of understanding to Him?

In these two verses Paul looks back to the vision of Isaiah which has nothing to do with our calling today. Here is another clip from Isaiah 40;

Isa 40:1 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

Isa 40:2 Speak lovingly to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is done, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.

Isa 40:3 The voice of him who cries in the wilderness, Prepare the way of Jehovah, make straight a highway in the desert for our God.

Isa 40:4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked places shall be made level, and the rough places smooth;

Isa 40:5 and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken.

This is not a prophecy about our hope in the above heavens as found in Ephesians. Isaiah does not contain any hint of The Mystery, the dispensation of the Grace of God as found after Israel was put aside at Acts 28:25.

Paul quoted Isaiah 55:3 in his gospel in Acts 13:34, and here in Romans he quotes Isaiah 40. This is not Paul progressing in any revelation. In Romans 11, after his long explanation as to why God's faithfulness remained during Acts despite Israel's unfaithfulness, Paul praises God that "all Israel" will be saved. And all Israel will be saved because the "free gifts and calling of God are without change of mind" (Roms.11:29). This is Paul's hope at that time, that the Gentiles would provoke Israel to repentance and conversion. Paul did not say the gentiles were being saved to lead Israel into a later calling only revealed after Israel were put aside at Acts 28.

Gentiles were saved in the dispensational setting which is Israel and Israel's restoration. Now with this dispensational setting before us let us ponder once more the question, "What is the fullness of the Gentiles (nations) in Romans 11:25?"

Next lesson we will fully answer this by looking back to prophecy and what had gone before in the Gospels and Acts, not looking forward to the present dispensation of Ephesians and Colossians.