

It is imperative that we realize the enemy is more “cunning than any beast of the field” and we can be sure his question to Eve was delivered with respectful curiosity; “Is it so that God has said?” He then immediately altered God’s Words.

In his endeavors to deceive Christians today Satan is far too intelligent to ask them to go and commit adultery or send an agent into the local church boldly claiming to be Messiah. His techniques are the same today; he very slowly seduces the faithful away from the Word of God by using the Word of God in an altered state or out of context.

Eve eventually misquoted God’s Words, she omitted, she altered and she added to them (compare Gen.2:16-17 with Gen. 3:1 and 3:2-3.) This old technique has resulted in the same seduction away from the Word in wide stream Christianity today; here are some humorous examples.

Eve ate of the apple tree. (For the truth see the Genesis references above).

Three Kings arrived at the manger on Christmas Eve to worship the new born Son of God. For the truth see Matt.2:1-11 where “three” is not mentioned in relation to the wise men, not Kings. They arrived at the house, not a stable, and the Lord was a young child not a new born infant. That it could not have been Christmas Eve is obvious.

So who said Pentecost was the “birthday of the church” or that the Acts period was the beginning of the early “church”? It doesn’t matter who said it, what matters is this, are either of these statements the truth? The answer is no to both. Pentecost is a Feast given to Israel and the Acts period was God’s extended mercy to Israel, holding out His loving hands to them and even saving some Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy. See Lev.23, Roms.11:1-2, 10:21

Israel still remained as God’s people during Acts. From Acts 13 Israel was under God’s judgment she was stumbling, partially blinded. Because of this national stumbling, Gentiles were included in the calling of that time. Even though Israel was stumbling Paul writes that Israel had not stumbled to fall and was anticipating their full inclusion in God’s purposes for the world through them;

[Rom 11:11-12](#) And so I ask, "They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?" Of course not! On the contrary, because of their stumbling, salvation has come to the gentiles to make the Jews jealous. Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their fall means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! (ISV)

Back in Israel’s typical salvation, God took them immediately from Mt Sinai to the border of the Promised Land, see Deut. 1:2, but Israel lacked faith to enter. Israel was then lead for 40 years in the wilderness but God did not change His plans, Israel arrived at the Eastern border and entered through the Jordan River. The Lord did not introduce something new, or change His mind for Israel in Acts just because they were lacking in faith. This is what Paul says when he wrote Romans during the Acts period;

[Rom 11:28-29](#) Indeed as regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes. But as regards the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the free gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

However, the Lord had warned Israel that persistent rejection of his Word (in this case the proclamation of the Lord as their long awaited Messiah) would result in loss of privileges and curses would result, rather than blessing. According to the warning of Isaiah 6, at Acts 28, Israel was “put away” for a time.

[Act 28:25](#) And disagreeing with one another, they were let go (by God), Paul saying one word: Well did the Holy Spirit speak through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,

[Act 28:26](#) saying, "Go to this people and say: Hearing you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see and not perceive. (Isaiah 6).

After pronouncing this judgment passage against Israel, Paul then makes the following statement;

[Act 28:28](#) Therefore be it known to you that the salvation of God is sent to the nations, and they will hear.

During the Acts period Paul preached to the Jew first and when they rejected the gospel, he turned to the Gentiles, but here is a difference. Here Israel is finally placed aside and Paul proclaims a new message to all the nations without turning back to the Jews. The Jews have no advantage, no dispensational privilege today. All those dispensational things of the Acts period were put aside and a completely new set of conditions was introduced to the world through Paul the one appointed by God for us today.

The church to which we belong was revealed to Paul after Israel was put aside at Acts 28. Not before. Pentecost cannot be the “birthday” of our church, the Acts period is not “the beginning” of our church, it had not been revealed at that time. Let us read some plain statements of Paul in Ephesians;

Eph 3:1 For this cause, I, Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you nations,  
Eph 3:2 if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me toward you,  
Eph 3:3 that by revelation He made known to me the mystery

In this letter Paul is a prisoner for us Gentiles and we notice the link made with his imprisonment and the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to Paul for us. By comparing Scripture we notice something different, back in Acts this is what Paul said;

Act 28:17 And after three days it happened that Paul called together those being chief of the Jews. And they coming together, he said to them, Men, brothers, I did nothing against the people or customs of our fathers. I was delivered a **prisoner** from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans

Act 28:20 For this cause, then, I called for you, to see and to speak with you. For I have this chain around me **for the hope of Israel.**

Israel's hope is not our hope today. When we carefully compare Paul's own words we find something glaringly different between the Acts period and Ephesians, here more of Paul's words from the Acts period;

Act 24:14 But I confess this to you, that after the Way which they call heresy, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

Act 26:6 And now I stand and am judged for *the* hope of the promise made to our fathers by God,

Act 26:7 to which *promise* our twelve tribes hope to attain, serving God fervently night and day. For the sake of this hope, king Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

Act 26:22 Then having obtained help from God, I stand until this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said was going to happen;

Act 26:23 whether the Christ *was* liable to suffer, whether first by a resurrection of *the* dead He was going to proclaim light to the people and to the nations.

These statements by Paul in his Acts period ministry message cannot be married to the statements after the Acts period. The promises made to Israel's fathers, the things that Moses and the prophets wrote about were the basis of the Acts period but are not the dispensational basis of our calling today.

Let us read more of this change in Ephesians chapter 3;

Eph 3:7 Of this *gospel* I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effectual working of His power.

Eph 3:8 This grace is given to me (*who am* less than the least of all saints) **to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations,**

Eph 3:9 and to bring to light what *is* **the fellowship (or dispensation) of the mystery** which from eternity **has been hidden in God,** who created all things by Jesus Christ;

This gospel is concerning the unsearchable riches of Christ and the dispensation is one that had previously been hidden in God. Ephesians was not written in the Acts period, it was written after; after Israel had been put aside at Acts 28.

In Ephesians Paul writes about a completely new set of conditions that had previously been hidden in God, not revealed to Moses or the prophets but revealed to Paul alone. If it was given to Paul alone then Matthew, Mark, Luke and John do not know anything about it because they, like the prophets, did not receive this new message. The four gospels tell us of our Lord's death burial and resurrection, essential for the redemption of all but they do not write about our calling. However there is one other who knew nothing of this new set of conditions until its revelation and that is Paul.

One of the gravest mistakes in Bible exegesis is to take these later, post Acts truths of Paul and force them into his Acts period ministry and writings. This is wrong division and must be exposed for the confusion it creates.

For many years the Christian community has held to traditions which have concealed this wonderful post acts dispensation given to Paul for us today. The enemy has done his work well. Christians are confused with the traditions that Pentecost is the birthday of the church that the Acts is the history of early church and that Paul was given a progressive revelation of truth. These doctrines are not true.

Paul was given the dispensation of the grace of God for us today after the close of the book of Acts, it is important we know all about it.

In the following lessons we will bring forth all the evidence to show the marked dispensational differences in Paul, comparing his Acts period ministry and his post Acts ministry.

We are enjoying a series which identifies some of the wonderful differences in Paul's post Acts letters; the things which are uniquely ours today in the Lord Christ Jesus. Here is the wonderful opening to Ephesians;

[Eph 1:3](#) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ;

The church to which we belong was revealed to Paul after Israel was put aside at Acts 28, not before. Pentecost is not the "birthday" of our church, the Acts period is not "the beginning" of our church. At the end of the book of Acts, not the beginning, Israel was put to one side for a time and then Paul received the set of conditions that exist today. The church to which we belong was only revealed after Acts 28.

What does this mean? Aren't all believers in the Lord Christians? Yes, we could say that, though believers were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Then if they are all Christians doesn't that mean everyone is in the church going to heaven? No, it does not! Abraham was made righteous by grace through faith, but Abraham is not part of our calling.

So what about those Christians in the Acts period? They believed in the Lord Christ Jesus, they were saved by faith in His shed blood, death burial and resurrection weren't they? Yes of course they were saved by the same faith we express but does that mean our calling started back then? Absolutely not! Let me explain.

Last lesson we gave some humorous examples of traditional errors and this lesson we have to address a very serious one. To learn we must unlearn and this can be very difficult.

As I grew up in the Christian community and noticed all the different denominations I was told we all belonged to the "one true church". This not only extended to the friendly folk in the other "churches" but included all the faithful at all times. Abraham was included, King David, Noah and of course, the ones who believed in the Lord in the Gospels and Acts period. Everyone belonged to the "true" church and everyone was going to heaven. This made me comfortable and it sounded good at the time. However, this is a deception and is untrue no matter how many times we hear it.

Israel is a called out company, an election. Israel is a church to which we believers today do not belong. The Father has a purpose for Israel; she will be a great and mighty nation on the earth in her special land. Most of us are aware of this, if not, please read again Genesis 12:1-3. The church Israel will be blessed on the earth and all the families of the earth will be blessed through her.

The Father also revealed through the Prophets another called out company of faithful ones who would partake of all the blessings of Abraham, including the Kingdom on the earth and the wonderful City God prepared for Abraham and those of like faith. This called out company; this church, was not destined to be blessed in the above heavens either and we can read about it in Hosea chapters 1 & 2 and Isaiah chapters 1 & 10. The members of this church had the same overcoming faith as Abraham and during the Acts period it included Jew and Gentile believers. Let us see this in the writings of our apostle Paul.

Here is the gospel of their salvation as found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians;

[1Co 15:1](#) And, brothers, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you have received, and in which you stand;

[1Co 15:2](#) by which you also are being kept safe, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

[1Co 15:3](#) For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures,

[1Co 15:4](#) and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures;

Today, we believe this same good news but back then, during Acts, because they believed this same gospel at that time, did that make them members of the church which is His Body? No it did not! The church which is His Body was not revealed at that time. So what was their church; what was their calling and what was their hope? We have already referred to the prophets and here are the following Scriptures through Paul which supply the answers;

[Rom 9:23](#) and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He had before prepared to glory;

[Rom 9:24](#) whom He also called, not only us, of Jews, but also of the nations?

[Rom 9:25](#) As He also says in Hosea, "I will call those not My people, My people; and those not beloved, Beloved."

[Rom 9:26](#) And it shall be, in the place where it was said to them. "You are not My people; there they shall be called sons of the living God."

Can you see Paul says plainly that the believing Jews and Gentiles of the Acts period were CALLED according to prophecy? Their "church" was the remnant the prophets spoke about. Peter refers to Hosea in 1Pet.2:10.

[1Pe 2:9](#) But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for possession, so that you might speak of the

praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;  
1Pe 2:10 *you* who then were not a people, but now the people of God, those not pitied *then*, but now pitied.

The Bible student might like to note that Peter also refers to Isaiah 28:16 in 1 Pet.2:6 which is the very prophecy Paul uses in Roms.9:32-33 & 10:11. Peter and Paul are on the same prophetic page regarding the faithful of the Acts period. Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles says the believing Jews and Gentiles were the called of prophecy, Peter an Apostle to the Jews says the believing Jews were of the same company.

These faithful believers, yes Christians, of the Acts period were the called out company of prophecy and they were to be blessed with faithful Abraham;

Gal 3:21 *Is the Law then against the promises of God? Let it not be said!*

Gal 3:29 *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.*

The reader can check out the following references for their hope at that time, Acts 13:32, 14:22, 17:30-31 (the world in view, not heaven), Acts 26:6-7, 18, 22 (note the inheritance is that which the prophets spoke about), Acts 28:20, Roms.9:25, 26 and Hosea 1:11, 14:4-7, Roms.11:25-26, 15:4-13, Gals.3:6-9, 18, 29, 4:26 and Hebs.12:22-26 to cite a few.

The earth was in view during Acts, the Lord's near return with the trumpet blast as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to sit on David's throne was the hope held. The supernatural gifts of prophecy were enjoyed during Acts as a foretaste of the coming Kingdom on the earth, Hebs.6:4-5.

We see how all of these things of the Acts period are associated with the earth, the new earth and the New Jerusalem (which will ultimately replace the Old Jerusalem when it descends to the new earth). These things are not ours today; they were put aside with Israel at Acts 28.

Let us now read of our blessings and their location as given to Paul for us to embrace in this wonderful dispensation of the grace of God, the Mystery;

Eph 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ;*

Paul uses a contrast here to emphasize our blessings. He writes "every" (plural) spiritual "blessing" (singular). Our blessings are spiritual. We will not be blessed with faithful Abraham in the Promised Land; the Jerusalem which is above is not the mother of us all today.

This phrase "in the heavenlies" does not occur anywhere else in Scriptures except Ephesians. This is where our blessings are located. Here is the very next reference to "in the heavenlies" in Ephesians;

Eph 1:15-16 *Therefore I also, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers,*

Eph 1:17 *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,*

Eph 1:18 *...that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*

Eph 1:19 *and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing according to the working of His mighty strength*

Eph 1:20 *which He worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,*

His riches of glory inheritance (for us) is located where Christ is seated at the Father's right hand.

Our every spiritual blessing is "in the heavenlies" where Christ is seated at God's right hand.

The power in us (not experienced by human senses) is the same power which raised our Head to the heavenlies. Our blessings are located in our inheritance which is in the very same place; "in the heavenlies".

This wonderful inheritance, hope and riches of blessing was not given to Paul prior to Israel's setting aside at Acts 28.

Let us recognize "the things differing" and rejoice in our hearty compliance with these words of Paul for us today;

Col 3:1 *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.*

Col 3:2 *Be mindful of things above, not on things on the earth.*

The Apostle Paul makes claims to be the sole recipient of The Mystery, the dispensation of the Grace of God in the following passages;

Eph 3:1 For this cause, I, Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you nations, (Gentiles)

Eph 3:2 if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me toward you,

Eph 3:3 that by revelation He made known to me the mystery

Eph 3:7 Of this gospel I was made a minister,

Eph 3:8 This grace is given to me

Paul states the same position in Col.1:23-27 and 2Tim.1:8-12. Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for us Gentiles with a dispensation of God is his post Acts ministry. In Ephesians & Colossians Paul says that the dispensation given to him alone for us Gentiles today was "hidden in God" (Eph.3:9) and "hidden from ages and from generations" (Col.1:26).

This special revelation was given to Paul after Israel were set aside at Acts 28 and we are providing Scriptural evidence to show that today's dispensation was hidden in God and away from ages and generations up until it was revealed. Prior to its revelation it was also hidden away from Paul and this was proven by showing the dispensational differences in Paul's Acts letters and ministry compared to those letters he wrote after Acts 28 and his ministry found in them.

Turning back to the Acts period we read Paul's own statements regarding his worship and centre of faith during that time. Defending himself before the governor Felix, Paul says this;

Act 24:14 But I confess this to you, that after the Way which they call heresy, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

During the Acts period Paul worshipped the God of his (& Israel's) fathers and believed all things written in the OT. This could not include Paul's post Acts gospel of The Mystery of Ephesians 3 because the OT knew nothing about it.

It is very important to notice that Paul was called and commissioned by the God of Israel's fathers;

Act 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Just One, and to hear a voice out of His mouth.

Notice Paul was called by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the same God who called Moses (Acts7:32) and who had glorified His Son Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 3:13, 5:30). During Acts, Paul worshipped the God who called Moses. Moses was sent to Israel as was Paul in the Acts period despite the fact he was the apostle of the Gentiles at that time. However, Paul's Acts period commission from the God of Israel was to the Jew first, see Acts 9:15, 26:19-20 & Roms.1:16 & 2:9-10. From Acts 9 to Acts 28, Paul went to the Jew first, see Acts 26:20.

After Acts 28, Paul did not speak of God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel had been put to one side at Acts 28 and it is now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the God of all (Eph.1:3, 17 & 4:6). After Acts 28 Paul was sent to all the nations with the glorious message that Christ was now among them independent of Israel, see Eph.3:1 & Col.1:24-27. It was no longer Jew first; it was no longer God in His relationship with Israel's Fathers.

Looking back to Paul's Acts period ministry we find another statement which is in harmony with his worship of the God of Israel and his belief in all things in the Law and the Prophets;

Act 25:8 Defending himself, Paul said, Neither against the Law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything.

Act 28:17 And after three days it happened that Paul called together those being chief of the Jews. And they coming together, he said to them, Men, brothers, I did nothing against the people or customs of our fathers. I was delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans

Notice all the way to Acts 28 Paul declared he had not offended in anyway against the Law of the Jews, the Temple or the customs of his and Israel's fathers. Now consider this passage written after Acts 28;

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who were once afar off are made near by the blood of Christ.

Eph 2:14 For He is our peace, He making us both one, and He has broken down the middle wall of partition *between us,*

Eph 2:15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity (the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances) so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, making peace *between them;*

Eph 2:16 and so that He might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity in Himself.

How could Paul write, even figuratively, that the middle wall of partition had been broken down between Jew and Gentile and not offend the Laws of Israel? See Lev.22:10 & Num.16:40.

How could Paul even hint that the enmity the Law of Commandments (contained in ordinances) had been abolished without offending the Law? Compare Ex.12:14, 17, 31:16 & Numb.18:8.

How could Paul not offend a Jew when he said of the two (Jews and Gentiles) God had created one new man?

For those who suggest that Paul had a progressive revelation we find such statements in Acts 25:8 and 28:17 totally contrary to such a position. In Acts 21:27-30 we find the middle wall of partition still standing, past which Paul, as a Jew, was free to go but Trophimus was not. Both these men were believers in the Lord and made righteous by grace.

Remember, Paul has already told us that he worshipped the God of his fathers during Acts, believing all things in the Law and Prophets. He also says this;

[Act 26:22](#) Then having obtained help from God, I stand until this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said was going to happen;

The letters of Paul which are consistent with his Acts statements and ministry are these, Galatians, 1@2 Thessalonians, 1@2Corinthians, Hebrews and Romans.

Some of the progressive revelation teachers will say the Paul gradually decreased his use of the Old Testament as more details of The Mystery of Ephesians were revealed, however this is not the case, in fact quite the opposite. Here are the same Acts period letters with their number of OT quotes placed in parentheses; Galatians ((10), 1@2 Thessalonians (0 but references to prophecy and end time events thereof), 1@2Corinthians (27), Hebrews (42) and Romans (68).

It is interesting to note that Paul's gospel as recorded in Acts 13 contained 5 OT quotes and a recount of Israel's typical salvation. So we see Paul's first recorded gospel started back in Israel's typical salvation and Paul increased the use of the OT as his Acts period ministry progressed.

Turning to Paul's statements after Acts 28 we remind ourselves of these words:

[Eph 3:8](#) This grace is given to me (*who am less than the least of all saints*) to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations,

[Eph 3:9](#) and to bring to light what *is the fellowship* (dispensation) of the mystery which from eternity has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ;

The letters which speak of the unsearchable riches of Christ and the dispensation of The Mystery are these; Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1@2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. Their OT content is as follows; Ephesians (8), Philippians (0), Colossians (0), 1@2 Timothy (2), Titus (0) and Philemon (0).

If Romans was the last letter of Paul in the Acts period, then it drops from 68 plus OT quotes in that letter to 8 in Ephesians with just 2 more in the remaining post Acts letters. It is impossible to claim Paul gradually reduced his use of the OT in the light of these statistics; in fact, such teaching is quite contrary to Scripture. Acts is not a transition it was the ends of the ages. Acts is not a progressive revelation it was Moses the Law and the Prophets.

To sum up this lesson;

The Mystery, the present dispensation of the grace of God was given to Paul alone, it was unknown by Moses, the Prophets and Paul during the Acts period. In the Acts period Paul believed all things in the OT after Acts he spoke about things not found in it.

In this present dispensation Paul refers to God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all, whereas previously He was the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel's fathers. It was Israel's God who called Paul in the Acts period, it was the God of all in the post Acts dispensation.

In the Acts period Paul says that he had not offended the Law or the Temple but after Acts 28 writes about the breaking down of the Middle Wall of partition, a physical part of Israel's Temple, and the abolition of the enmity contained in the ordinances. Both such statements are in clear opposition to Paul's Acts ministry and worship and would certainly have offended the Jews.

Paul's letters fall into two natural groups, those written during Acts which are in complete internal harmony with his Acts ministry and witness and those written after Acts which are dispensationally different. Please note, there are

fundamental truths in all off Paul's letters, such as righteousness by faith reckoned by grace and redemption by Christ's shed blood and the forgiveness of sins.

May each reader search and see if these things are so. Paul does not exhort us to rightly divide the OT from the New, we must also rightly divide the New and that includes Paul's letters.

We have all been told that at some point in the New Testament the nation of Israel was set aside by God, and this is true. God did put aside the apple of his eye and introduce a completely new dispensation, but when did it happen.

Most traditions state Israel was put aside at the cross, at Pentecost or at Acts 9 or 13. Traditionalists then go on to assume that we, the church which is His Body, either replace Israel or fulfill all that Israel showed forth in type. You will hear such erroneous terms as "spiritual Israel", the "one true church" and from there the false foundation is edified to include the book of Acts as the history of the early "church". Eventually some will begin to teach that the believers of the Acts period were the church which is His Body in genesis and that Acts was a progression. All of this is confusion.

The timing of Israel's dismissal is of critical importance and we have shown that Israel remained up until Acts 28.

Rom 10:20 But Isaiah is very bold and says, "I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became known to those who did not ask after Me."

Rom 10:21 But to Israel He says, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobeying and gainsaying people."

Rom 11:1 I say then, Did not God put away His people? Let it not be said! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

Rom 11:2 God did not thrust out His people whom He foreknew.

Act 28:25 And disagreeing with one another, they were let go,

Why is the acknowledging of this setting aside of Israel at Acts 28 so important? Because during Acts, our Apostle Paul's ministry was fully OT based, but after Acts 28 his ministry was based upon a revelation of the Mystery, a complete dispensation not found in prophecy or promise (Eph.3:1-2, 7-9).

During Acts, while Israel remained, Paul wrote of Israel's promises and future restoration and clearly taught the believing Jews and Gentiles of that time that they were to be blessed according to all the promises and prophecies written about Israel. Here is Paul's confession regarding his Acts period ministry;

Act 24:14 But I confess this to you, that after the Way which they call heresy, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

Act 26:6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made to our fathers by God,

Act 26:7 to which promise our twelve tribes hope to attain, serving God fervently night and day. For the sake of this hope, king Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

Act 26:22 Then having obtained help from God, I stand until this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said was going to happen;

Let us look at some key features of Paul's Acts period letter to the Galatians and find an internal harmony in that letter to Paul's clear statements regarding his ministry at that time.

Galatians 3:5 is dispensationally the promise, prophecy and purpose for Israel and the earth.

Gal 3:5 Then He supplying the Spirit to you and working powerful works in you, is it by works of the law, or by hearing of faith?

In Galatians 3:5 we see supernatural gifts on the believers at that time and God working powerfully among them.

Supernatural gifts are the blessing of Abraham (3:14), the same powers and signs of Israel's history (Ex.28:3, 31:3), and all prophesied for Israel (Is.32:13-16, 44:3-4, Ez.36:27, 39:29 & Joel 2:28-29).

Galatians 3:6-7 is dispensational PROMISE, PROPHECY and PURPOSE for Israel and the earth.

Gal 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

Gal 3:7 Therefore know that those of faith, these are the SONS (heirs) of Abraham.

Gal 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith, preached the gospel before to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all nations be blessed."

Gal 3:9 So then those of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Gal 3:27 For as many as were baptized into Christ, you put on Christ.

Gal 3:28 There cannot be Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is no male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and HEIRS (sons) according to the promise.

Notice that faith reckoned as righteousness by God's grace is a fundamental truth; truth for all at all times. The prophecy about faith reckoned as righteousness on Gentiles as well can be seen in Gal. 3:8. For righteousness in Christ see also Is.45:20, and remember one of the glorious titles of Christ in the OT is Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our (Israel's)

righteousness. However these Acts period believers were Abraham's sons, that is, HEIRS, which is not true for us today after Acts 28. As sons of Abraham these Acts period heirs had an inheritance on the earth and the New Jerusalem.

These Acts period believers were blessed with supernatural gifts by faith, were the Sons, heirs of Abraham by faith, and the inheritance they anticipated was the Promised Land given to Abraham before the law. Let us see this in Galatians.

Galatians 3:16 and Galatians 18 speak clearly of the inheritance in view and it is the Promised Land. Again we have Promise, Prophecy, and Purpose for Israel and the earth. This inheritance of land promised was since the world began.  
[Gal 3:16](#) And to Abraham and to his Seed the promises were spoken. It does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, "And to your Seed," which is Christ. (Gen.17:7-8).  
[Gal 3:18](#) For if the inheritance is of Law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by way of promise.

The believers of the Acts period were "in Christ", and being in Christ, and God's Word declares them the Sons of Abraham and heirs according to the promise God gave Abraham. This is not about us today after Acts 28.

Paul continues through into chapter 4 developing his theme of sonship and inheritance. Paul uses the common language of the adoption process of his day when a child in the family or a person outside was adopted as the heir. Adoption back then was not to make an orphan a child of the family but to appoint the heir. These Jew and Gentile believers of the Acts period had received an adoption and their inheritance as Sons (heirs) of Abraham was the Promised Land.

[Gal 4:4](#) But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, coming into being out of a woman, having come under Law,  
[Gal 4:5](#) that He might redeem those under Law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons.  
[Gal 4:6](#) And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.  
[Gal 4:7](#) So that you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, also an heir of God through Christ.

These believers of the Acts period had received an adoption, they were God's and Abraham's Sons by faith, Paul had already written in chapter 3;

[Gal 3:26](#) For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (and Gal.3:7)

In Galatians an adoption existed which gave the believers of that time the liberty to call God Father as opposed to slaves who could not use that term. The Sons of the Acts period had an inheritance, the Promised Land with something added;

[Gal 4:26](#) But the Jerusalem *from above* is free, who is the mother of us all.  
[Gal 4:28](#) But brothers, we, like Isaac, are children of promise.

The believers of that time are likened to Isaac, a child of Promise (prophecy and purpose) and they had a mother, the Jerusalem which is above. This heavenly city is also Promise, Prophecy and Purpose for Israel and the earth.

Abraham looked for this city and we find this union of the earth and eventually this wonderful city on the earth (Rev.3:12 & 21:in these passages in Hebrews);

[Heb 12:22](#) But you have come to Mount Zion and to *the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,*  
[Heb 12:23](#) to the *general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in Heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*  
[Heb 12:24](#) and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of Abel.*

We leave comment about Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant (Promise, Prophecy and Purpose for Israel and the earth) to another lesson. But please note carefully Paul refers to the two sons, two cities and two covenants in Gal.4:22-26. Paul was a minister of the New Covenant in 2Cor.3:6 and linked mount Zion, the New Jerusalem and the New Covenant in the Hebrews passage above. Galatians, Corinthians and Hebrews are Acts period letters and the Lord Christ in the Acts period was the High Priest King of Israel. This is not the title and relationships of our Lord after Acts 28.

Next lesson we shall compare Ephesians to these dispensational settings of Galatians and see the glaring differences in our Apostle Paul as he writes in Ephesians of a wonderful calling which goes back before Abraham and the formation of Israel. Ephesians is not Promise, Prophecy and Purpose for Israel and the earth as we shall clearly see.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians he opened, as usual, with a prayer for their spiritual establishment;

Php 1:8 For God is my witness how greatly I long after you all in *the* bowels of Jesus Christ.

Php 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and *in* all perception;

Php 1:10 that you may distinguish *between* things that differ, that you may be sincere and without offense until the day of Jesus Christ,

Php 1:11 being filled *with the* fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Paul's longing for them all was a strong desire of a personal nature, but in the spiritual realm he wanted them ultimately to be filled with the fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. To realize such an objective he wanted their love to super abound more and more in full knowledge and all perception in order that they would be able to discern; to test things differing. Do you notice in most Bible teaching that things different are explained away as being the same?

In this series we have been showing the things differing in Paul our Apostle. Paul had two separate and distinct ministries; one during the time covered by the book of Acts, and one after.

During Acts Paul declared that he was "worshipping the God of his fathers, believing all things written in the Law and in the Prophets", Acts 24:14. During Acts, Paul was saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said were going to happen, Acts 26:22. Even as late as Acts 28:20 Paul was bound for the hope of Israel. The hope of Israel was the hope held by believing Jews and Gentiles of that time.

The Acts period covered about 40 years during which time God was holding out His hands to the nation of Israel, Roms.10:21 and Isaiah 65:2. Eventually Israel was put to one side at Acts 28:25-28 and our Lord descended and revealed to Paul a wonderful dispensation which features a purpose of God for heavenly places and which is independent of the nation of Israel. Paul sums up this post Acts ministry by saying something completely different, namely that his gospel now was concerning the unsearchable riches of Christ which was embraced by a dispensation previously hidden in God, Eph.3:8-9. After Acts, Paul was a prisoner of Jesus Christ for all nations with a completely new dispensation proclaimed.

The internal material in Paul's letters divides them naturally into these two ministries. During Acts Paul wrote Galatians, 1@2 Thessalonians, 1@2 Corinthians, Hebrews and Romans. Seven letters which contain 190 Old Testament quotes and constantly refer to Israel in theme and purpose. After Acts 28 we have seven letters (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1@2Timothy, Titus and Philemon) wherein Paul quotes the OT about 8 times and reveals dispensational matters which cannot be found in and differ significantly from the first group.

Last lesson we read Galatians 3, an Acts period letter, which is dispensationally the promise, prophecy and purpose for Israel and the earth.

Gal 3:5 Then He supplying the Spirit to you and working powerful works in you, is it by works of the law, or by hearing of faith?

Gal 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

Gal 3:7 Therefore know that those of faith, these are the SONS (heirs) of Abraham.

Gal 3:9 So then those of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Gal 3:27 For as many as were baptized into Christ, you put on Christ.

Gal 3:28 There cannot be Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is no male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and HEIRS (sons) according to the promise.

These Jew and Gentile believers of the Acts period were one in Christ but had received an adoption, their inheritance as Sons (heirs) of Abraham and God was the Promised Land and later the New Jerusalem which was to descend to the earth and they were likened to Isaac.

Gal 4:5 that He might redeem those under Law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Gal 4:7 So that you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, also an heir of God through Christ.

Gal 4:26 But the Jerusalem *from* above is free, who is the mother of us all.

Gal 4:28 But brothers, we, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Not one of these dispensational features of the Acts period can be found in the post Acts letters of Paul. We are not empowered with supernatural gifts; we are not to be blessed with faithful Abraham in the inheritance given to Abraham by promise. Our hope is not the Land and the New Jerusalem, our adoption is different. And finally, we are not like Isaac, children of promise, we are a choice made before Prophecy and Promise. We cannot find anything in Paul's post Acts letters which embraces these things.

Let us examine one major difference between Galatians of the Acts period and the dispensational truth after Acts. The supply of the Holy Spirit and powerful works among the believers during the Acts period is conspicuous by their absence after Acts 28.

Not once does Paul state after Acts 28 that his gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ was accompanied with mighty signs and wonders. But back in the Acts period Paul was empowered as an Apostle and had gifts himself, see Roms.15:19, 1Cor.12:7, 11, 14:18 and Acts 19:11.

Now look at the differences after Acts 28. In Ephesians 4 we quote the gifts, not of the Holy Spirit, but of the Lord who descended and ascended after Acts 28;

Eph 4:7 But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Eph 4:8 Therefore He says, "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men."

Eph 4:9 (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

Eph 4:10 He who descended is the same also as He who ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.)

Eph 4:11 And truly He gave some *to be* apostles, and some *to be* prophets, and some *to be* evangelists, and some *to be* pastors and teachers,

Here in Ephesians there are no supernatural gifts given to anyone today. In this passage it is not firstly apostles, secondly prophets as in 1Cor.12:28, but in each case some.

The reader is invited to compare carefully, noting the differences, the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1Cor.12 where every believer of the Acts period received one or more of the supernatural gifts. How much distress has this lack of comparing things differing brought upon the Christian community today?

Let us see this absence of supernatural powers in Paul's personal life after Acts 28. When writing to the Philippians after Acts 28, Paul celebrated the mercy of God on Epaphraditus who had been sick nigh unto death, Phils.2:27. No supernatural gift restored Epaphraditus. In 2 Tim.4:20 Paul had to leave his friend Trophimus sick at Miletus and when writing to Timothy in the matter of his frequent sicknesses, 1Tim.5:23, Paul advised a little wine as relief. We feel certain that if Paul retained the powers of the Acts period then these friends would not have suffered in any way.

Returning to the Ephesians 4 passage above we note the following verses;

Eph 4:11 And truly He gave some *to be* apostles, and some *to be* prophets, and some *to be* evangelists, and some *to be* pastors and teachers,

Eph 4:12 for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Eph 4:13 And this until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ;

Notice the gifts of the ascended Christ are for the perfecting of the saints. This word perfecting (which only occurs here) means to complete thoroughly, which is to repair or adjust. Paul is writing to the saints and faithful who had crossed the Acts 28 boundary and these were in need of adjustment. There was a complete change of dispensation after Acts 28. This new dispensation included new blessings in a new place of inheritance, a new calling, a new relationship between Christ and the redeemed, a new hope and a new creation of the One New Man. We hope to look at more of these in later editions.

One final point from Eph.4:13. Please notice the four secondary objectives in view at the giving of these gifts; the unity of the faith, the acknowledging of the son of God, to a full grown man and the fullness of Christ. Let us focus on "a full grown man". The word "man" in this verse is aner and it first appears in the NT in Matt.1:16 where it is translated "husband". It occurs in Acts 15:22 where it is translated "men" and it occurs in 2Cor.11:2 as follows;

2Co 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one Man, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

Can we see the differences? During Acts, when Paul wrote the Corinthian letters, he was writing to those who "came behind in no gift" (1Cor.1:5-7 & 2Cor.1:21) and they were described as "a pure virgin" to Christ as the man or husband. After Acts 28 in this new dispensation, there are no supernatural gifts and believers are not "a pure virgin" but members of His Body, masculine. The goal of the gifts given after Acts 28 was to adjust the believers unto a full grown or perfect man, masculine.

Do you remember some of the joyous discoveries of childhood? Do you remember that first puppy, that first smell of the country fields or the hot bread shop on the city corner? We did not question whether those things existed because we experienced them with our own senses.

Childhood was a joyous discovery of new things and we grew in understanding because we accepted the new and different things around us as being part of the wider world in which we lived.

The Word of God is full of different things but sadly the denominational systems, for the most part, have suppressed these differences and we have been deprived of many of its rich depths. In this series we are showing some of the wonderful differences in Paul and I pray you make them your own by careful review and application of this rule; [2Ti 2:15](#) Study earnestly to present yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

We are showing that Paul's ministry can be clearly divided by his own statements which harmonize with the subject content of his epistles. This division pivots around the climax event of the Acts which was the placing aside of Israel nationally, at Acts 28. Israel was let go when, after constant rejection of their Messiah, the judgmental prophecy of Isaiah 6 was pronounced against them;

[Act 28:25-26](#) And disagreeing with one another, they were let go, Paul saying one word: Well did the Holy Spirit speak through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, "Go to this people and say: Hearing you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see and not perceive.

We shall show from Paul's own words, that his prison ministry prior to Acts 28 differs greatly to his prison ministry after Acts 28.

Paul was taken prisoner in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 21:30-33. Let us trace Paul's imprisonment from Acts 21 to Acts 28 and see why in his opinion, he was imprisoned at the hands of the Romans.

When Paul gave his defense before the Sanhedrin in Acts 22:1-21 he recounted his conversion. We note carefully that it was the God of Israel's fathers who had called Paul. Israel and God were still "together" at this point in the Acts period; [Act 22:14](#) ..The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Just One, and to hear a voice out of His mouth.

Turning to chapter 24 we find Paul defending himself before Governor Felix during which defense Paul says this;

[Act 24:11](#) You can know that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

[Act 24:14](#) But I confess this to you, that after the Way which they call heresy, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

[Act 24:15](#) And I have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of the just and unjust.

Here we find Paul telling us that Jerusalem and the Temple were still an important part of his worship to the God of his fathers, this is not the case after Acts 28. Jerusalem (and the New) will be the city of the great King on the earth and we shall see that the Lord ruling out of Zion was the hope held by Paul during Acts;

[Psa 48:2](#) Beautiful on high, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

Please notice Paul confessed that after the "way" so he worshipped the God of Israel's fathers. He believed all things written in the law and in the Prophets. During the Acts period the dispensational setting was all Old Testament purpose and promise but our calling today, after Acts 28, is not Old Testament purpose and promise. It is the same God today but He is not in covenant relationship with Israel after Acts 28. Here is one Psalm that was dear to Paul during the Acts period and this Psalm is Old Testament purpose and promise. Note also righteousness received from God;

[Psa 24:1](#) A Psalm of David. The earth is Jehovah's, and the fullness of it; the world, and those who dwell in it.

[Psa 24:2](#) For He has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.

[Psa 24:3](#) Who shall go up into the hill of Jehovah? Or who shall stand in His holy place?

[Psa 24:4](#) He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to vanity, and has not sworn deceitfully.

[Psa 24:5](#) He shall receive the blessing from Jehovah, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

You will find this Psalm quoted by Paul in 1Cor.10:26 & 28 and in mind when he wrote Hebs.12:22. The joyous hope Paul held during the Acts period was the Lord of Glory entering His inheritance upon the earth and roaring out of Zion.

During Paul's imprisonment as recorded in Acts 21 to Acts 28, he continues to declare this earthly hope and Old Testament promise and purpose as his ministry and the basis of his suffering. Before King Agrippa, Paul said this;  
[Act 26:6](#) And now I stand and am judged for *the* hope of the promise made to our fathers by God,  
[Act 26:7](#) to which *promise* our twelve tribes hope to attain, serving God fervently night and day. For the sake of this hope, king Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

The hope Paul held, as a prisoner during the Acts, was the same hope the 12 tribes of Israel were expecting. In other words, Paul's hope as a believer was the same hope of the unbelieving Israelites. They wanted the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth and Paul waited for the same. This is not the hope Paul reveals for us after Acts 28. Our hope today is certainly not the same as the one Paul and the 12 tribes hoped to attain during the Acts period.

This hope of Israel was the expectation of the promises made to Israel's fathers by their God. Our hope today is not based upon any promise made to Israel's fathers. Later in Acts 26 Paul challenges King Agrippa;

[Act 26:27](#) King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you believe.  
[Act 26:28](#) And Agrippa said to Paul, Do you persuade me to be a Christian in *but* a little?

The Prophets were the Word of the Gospel during the Acts period, read and count the OT quotes in Acts 2:14-36 & 13:32-41. Look again at Paul's statements as a prisoner in the latter stages of Acts;

[Act 28:17](#) And after three days it happened that Paul called together those being chief of the Jews. And they coming together, he said to them, Men, brothers, I did nothing against the people or customs of our fathers. I was delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans

[Act 28:20](#) For this cause, then, I called for you, to see and to speak with you. For I have this chain around me for the hope of Israel.  
[Act 28:23](#) And they having appointed him a day, many came to him in his lodging; to whom he expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them the things concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and out of the Prophets, from morning until evening.

Paul had been accused of "speaking against the people (Israel) and the Law and this place" in Acts 21:28. But from the first day Paul denied them replying that all such charges were false. Defending himself before Festus, Paul said this;

[Act 25:8](#) .....Neither against the Law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything.

Let me assure you that had Paul been proclaiming the truths revealed to him after Acts 28 he would certainly have offended the people, the customs of (Israel's) fathers, the Law and the Temple of Israel.

Paul plainly says that up until the very last chapter of this book of Acts he was a prisoner for the hope of Israel and was proclaiming Christ from the Old Testament dispensational settings. Paul does not proclaim the Lord in the dispensational settings of the Old Testament and he certainly was not a prisoner for the hope of Israel after Acts 28.

We read in Acts 28:25-28 that the nation of Israel was put to one side, they were let go until a future day when the Lord resumes His purposes with them. After this setting aside of Israel, then the Lord revealed to Paul the dispensational truth for today.

Now let us look closely at the statements by Paul after Acts 28.

In the opening of Ephesians and Colossians, letters proclaiming the present dispensation of the grace of God, Paul refers to our God like this;

[Eph 1:3](#) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, .....

[Col 1:2](#) ...Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and from *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

[Col 1:3](#) We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Notice the differences; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, God OUR (Gentiles) Father? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not mentioned in Paul's seven post Acts letters; in fact we search in vain for the phrase "the God of Israel's fathers". It is the same God but He is not in any covenant relationship with Israel after Acts 28; He will be in the future.

What about the hope differences after Acts 28. We search in vain in the post Acts letters of Paul to find any reference to the promises made to Israel's fathers as the basis of the new hope revealed. The hope of Ephesians cannot be found in any passage of the Old Testament, the Gospels or Paul's Acts period letters. Here is the hope of the church which is His Body as found in Ephesians;

[Eph 2:1](#) And He *has made you alive*, who were once dead in trespasses and sins,

[Eph 2:4](#) But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love *with which* He loved us

[Eph 2:5](#) (even when we were dead in sins) has made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved),

[Eph 2:6](#) and has raised *us* up together and made *us* sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,

Why can't we find this hope in any other Bible writer? Look at Paul's words here to find our answer;

Eph 3:7 Of this *gospel* I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effectual working of His power.

Eph 3:8 This grace is given to me (*who am* less than the least of all saints) to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations,

Eph 3:9 and to bring to light what *is* the fellowship of the mystery which from eternity has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ;

Our hope today is part of a dispensation of unsearchable riches, unsearchable because it was hidden in God and away from ages and generations (Col.1:26). Praise God my friends you are seeing these wonderful differences in Paul.

Next lesson we will focus on Paul's statements regarding the change of basis of his prison ministry.

In this series of lessons we are discovering the differences between the ministry of Paul during the Acts period and his ministry after Acts 28.

It is acknowledged across the wide spectrum of Christianity that at some point in the NT era the nation of Israel was put to one side. We have been showing that Acts 28 records that monumental event. From Genesis 12 to Acts 28, the church Israel and God's purposes for the earth through her were in view.

The Gospel records show that the Lord visited His people Israel, fulfilled all that had been written about Him so far as His rejection, humiliation and suffering for sin and death was concerned, and had risen from the dead. But Israel had not been cast aside at the cross or Acts 2, His rejection was part of God's purposes for Israel and all peoples.

Just as John the Baptist, the Lord and others had called to Israel during the Gospel records, so the Acts period was another 40 year long opportunity for Israel to hear the good news about their Messiah. Only now He was proclaimed as Messiah who had suffered according to prophecy but was now raised and ready to glorify Himself and His People on the earth. The Lord through the prophets had assured Israel if they turned back to Him He would turn back to them and reign out of Zion, see Deut.30:1-6, Is.1:16-19 & Zech.1:3, 14. The Lord, through Peter, repeats this great promise of prophecy to Israel:

Act 3: (13-18),19 Therefore repent and convert so that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Act 3:20 And He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was proclaimed to you,

We have been taught that the "church" started at the cross or Pentecost but this is a terrible confusion. The Acts period was an opportunity for Israel. Paul's gospel of Acts 13 is so parallel with the earlier one of Peter's it is amazing how so few see it. Look at the Psalm Paul uses for the hope in his gospel presentation in Acts 13 (33):

Psa 2:6 Yea, I have set My king on My holy hill, on Zion.

Psa 2:7 I will declare the decree of Jehovah. He has said to Me, You are My Son; today I have begotten You.

Psa 2:8 Ask of Me, and I shall give the nations for Your inheritance; and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.

When we examine Paul's ministry during the Acts period it is in perfect harmony with Acts 1:8 and was mostly proclaimed in the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath day. In Acts 13 Paul's gospel declared that Christ as the seed of David had been raised to sit on David's throne and it also included forgiveness of sins and righteousness. Forgiveness of sins and righteousness are both widely proclaimed in the Old Testament Levitical Offerings, in one of the Names of the Lord, Jehovah Tsidkenu (the Lord our righteousness), and in prophecy, see Is.45:25 and 53:7-11.

We also noted last lesson that Paul was imprisoned from Acts 21 through to Acts 28 and he clearly spoke of the spiritual reasons behind this Acts period of bondage. From Acts 28 back to the early days of his Acts period imprisonment, Paul's consistent claim is that he was bound for the hope of Israel and his teaching was in harmony with the Old Testament;

Act 28:20 For this cause, then, I called for you, to see and to speak with you. For I have this chain around me for the hope of Israel.

Act 26:6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made to our fathers by God,

Act 25:8 .....Neither against the Law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything.

Act 24:14 But I confess this to you, that after the Way which they call heresy, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

There is no doubt Paul received many revelations during the Acts period, but his testimony clearly shows that up to and during his Acts period imprisonment, he was teaching the doctrines and themes of the Old Testament;

Act 26:19 After this, king Agrippa, I did not disobey the heavenly vision.

Act 26:20 But to those first in Damascus, and Jerusalem, and to all the country of Judea, and to the nations, I made known the command to repent and to turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance

Act 26:21 Because of these things, having caught me in the temple, The Jews tried to kill me.

Act 26:22 Then having obtained help from God, I stand until this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said was going to happen;

Act 26:23 whether the Christ was liable to suffer, whether first by a resurrection of the dead He was going to proclaim light to the people and to the nations.

Now let us look closely at the statements by Paul after Acts 28 as to the spiritual reasons of his imprisonment. The differences are significant;

Eph 3:1 For this cause, I, Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you nations,

Eph 3:2 if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me toward you,

Eph 3:3 that by revelation He made known to me the mystery

Here is a significant change. Paul is now the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the nations or Gentiles. Not once in the post Acts letters does Paul state that we Gentiles are to provoke Israel to jealousy, see Deut. 32:21, Roms.10:19, 11:11-14. Not once is prophecy used to disclose God's purpose for us nations. He is not bound for the hope of Israel nor bound for accusations against him for offending Israel, the Temple or Caesar. Paul goes on to say in this chapter;

Eph 3:8 This grace is given to me (who am less than the least of all saints) to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations,

Eph 3:9 and to bring to light what is the fellowship of the mystery which from eternity has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ;

Paul's imprisonment after Acts 28 is associated with a ministry of hidden purpose. The riches of Christ in the post Acts letters are unsearchable. We will compare some of these riches in a later lesson but for now let us find Paul confirming that the purpose of God for today is associated with this later period of his bondage;

Eph 6:19 ..pray for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,

Eph 6:20 for which I am an ambassador in bonds; so that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

In Colossians we read again of Paul's suffering in prison and the dispensation given to Paul that was hidden away from ages and generations. Look at the double filling up in this passage;

Col 1:24 who now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and I fill up the things lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, on behalf of His body, which is the church;

Col 1:25 of which I became a minister, according to the administration of God given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God;

Col 1:26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

Col 1:27 For to them God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

It is true Paul suffered during the Acts period but his post Acts suffering is additional. In Acts 20:22-27 Paul was journeying to Jerusalem and he expected to die there. Paul anticipated that his sufferings and ministry of the Acts dispensation were to conclude in the city which was the centre of his hope. But God had another purpose which was revealed to Paul after Acts 28. This hidden purpose was linked with this "extra" suffering Paul had to endure; it filled up his sufferings which he had thought were near completion. But please notice the parallel in Colossians 1 above, Paul's suffering was filled up and the present dispensation given to him fills up the Word of God.

The words "fill up" in verse 24 and the words "to fulfill" in verse 25 have as their base in the original language the word "pleroo" which is translated "complete" in Col.2:10.

Here is another link between Paul's post Acts suffering and the truth for today;

Col 4:2 Continue in prayer and watch in it with thanksgiving,

Col 4:3 praying together about us also, that God may open to us a door of the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I also have been bound,

And again;

2Ti 1:8 Therefore you should not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner. But be partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God,

2Ti 1:9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the eternal times.

There is a difference in Paul's prison sufferings. During Acts he was bound for the purposes of God through Israel; he was bound for that hope. After Acts 28, the Lord revealed to Paul another purpose which went back before Abraham, before the foundation of the world. This purpose had been hidden in God, was not disclosed through the prophets. Paul's post Acts prison ministry filled up the sufferings the Lord told him he would endure and associated with these additional sufferings was the additional revelation of the present dispensation and the calling of today.

To conclude this lesson it must be noted that our Lord was rejected and suffered at the hands of His people Israel during the gospels and continued to be rejected up to the end of the book of Acts. Is it any different now, after Acts 28? No it isn't. Our Lord, the Head, is rejected by the nations as well. Thus our Lord's sufferings have been filled up as well.

Praise our God for the wonderful discoveries we make when we test or distinguish the things differing.

The Word of the Lord is beautiful and enlightening is it not? The Psalmist rejoiced in its beauty:

**Psa 19:7** The Law of Jehovah is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of Jehovah is sure, making the simple wise.

**Psa 19:8** The Precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart; the Commandments of Jehovah are pure, giving light to the eyes.

**Psa 19:11** And Your servant is warned by them; in keeping them there is great reward.

We rejoice in the testimony of our Lord given us through Paul in his post Acts ministry. My prayer is that you are enjoying this series concerning the differences in our Apostle Paul and you are inspired to study your Bibles with continuing vigour.

This lesson we begin to consider the major differences in Paul's Apostleship to the Gentiles during the Acts period and afterwards. Let us revisit his commissions, his own statements about his ministry and Scriptures which relate to these things. Firstly, during the Acts period, Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles:

**Act 9:15** But the Lord said to him, Go! For this one is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before nations and kings and the sons of Israel.

**Rom 11:13** For I speak to you, the nations; since I am the apostle of the nations, I glorify my ministry;

The God of Israel's fathers (Acts 22:14) had separated Paul from his mother's womb (Gal.1:15). This strong link between the God who called Paul and the nation of Israel is important. After Acts 28 no mention is made of God being associated with Israel's fathers.

Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles during Acts but he was also commissioned to speak to Kings and the children of Israel. Paul's ministry during Acts was not exclusively to the nations. Let us confirm this from the Acts records and Paul's own words.

Soon after Paul's conversion we find him preaching the Lord in the synagogues of Damascus and Jerusalem. His first ministry was to the Jews exclusively, in other words, no Gentiles heard Paul in his early ministry years;

**Act 9:19** And taking food, *he* was strengthened. And Saul was certain days with the disciples in Damascus.

**Act 9:20** And immediately he proclaimed Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

**Act 9:22** But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived at Damascus, proving that this One is the Christ.

**Act 9:28** And he was with them, coming in and going out in Jerusalem.

**Act 9:29** And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and argued with the Hellenists (Greek speaking Jews). But they seized him in order to kill him.

Now look carefully at Paul's account where he says he was obedient to the heavenly vision and the commission given him on the road to Damascus:

**Act 26:19** After this, king Agrippa, I did not disobey the heavenly vision.

**Act 26:20** But to those **first** in Damascus, and Jerusalem, and to all the country of Judea, **and to the nations**, I made known the command to repent and to turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance.

Notice Paul went to the Jews first and this is a very critical difference in Paul's ministries because after Acts 28 the Jews had no dispensational advantage and Paul ministered to all nations without distinction or priority.

Paul returned to his home country at the close of Acts 9 (v30) and is not featured in the Acts' records until chapter 11 (v25) where another important statement is made as to the direction of the witness:

**Act 11:19** Then, indeed, they who were scattered abroad by the persecution that rose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the Word to no one except the Jews.

Despite the fact that Peter had "opened the door to the Gentiles" in Acts 10, the witness remained directed at the nation of Israel only, but now it was reaching out to those of the dispersion; the Jews outside the land. Peter preached to a Gentile inside the land and then the message moved to the Jews outside the land. From Acts 13 onwards the message to the Jews outside the land, as recorded in Acts, was mostly through Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles. Can we see the Jew first in the order of these events?

During the Acts period Peter was an apostle of the circumcision but preached to a Gentile and Paul was an apostle to the un-circumcision but preached to the Jews.

Now if we are not careful here, we will follow the traditional error and believe that the church which is His Body started at that time because Jews and Gentiles were receiving salvation. The inclusion of Gentiles or nations into salvation during the Acts period does not mean our calling began or later truth was gradually revealed.

The first thing we need to recall is that it was never a mystery that Gentiles would be included in salvation. When Israel was given the Law it was to be applied equally to the strangers (Gentiles) who had chosen to live among them Ex.12:48-49, Lev.24:22 and Num.15:15-16.

Historically, God had reached out to Gentiles so it should not surprise us that Paul was sent to them. Jonah had witnessed to gentiles, and the Lord recounts two other historic ministries to gentiles in his denunciation of the Jews in His home town as recorded in Luke 4:24-27.

Historically Gentiles had been included into salvation and blessing through Israel who enjoyed the prior position as God's chosen people. This is precisely the case during the Acts period. It was Jew first, then the Gentile cp Roms.2:9, 10.

The inclusion of the Gentiles into salvation and blessing with Israel was not only proclaimed through historic precedent but was clearly foretold in the prophets. Let me put this the other way around. The prophets spoke of salvation coming to the nations and so the addition of gentiles into the assemblies during the Acts period was not the beginning of "the church" or our present dispensation of grace. Prophecy and The Mystery of Ephesians 3 are not to be mixed.

As we have observed, it was actually Peter who introduced the gospel to the Nations in the Acts period as recorded in Acts 10-11:18. Here is James' explanation of the event in Acts 15:

Act 15:7 And after much disputing, Peter rose up and said to them, Men, brothers, you recognize that from ancient days God chose among us that through my mouth the nations should hear the Word of the gospel, and believe.

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,

Act 15:16 "After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which has fallen down; and I will build again its ruins, and I will set it up,

Act 15:17 so those men who are left might seek after the Lord, and all the nations on whom My name has been called, says the Lord, who does all these things."

The inclusion of the Gentiles during the Acts period was in harmony with prophecy and thus the Jew and Gentile company of that time could not be the church which is His body of the post Acts ministry of Paul.

Now what about Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles during Acts, what did he write regarding the inclusion of the Gentiles during that time?

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

Act 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have set You to be a light of the nations, for salvation to the end of the earth."

The Lord commanded Paul to turn to the Nations but notice it was Jew first and Paul's authority to turn to the Gentiles is given from Isaiah 49. Paul is not sent to the Gentiles during Acts with the Mystery of Ephesians 3 else we should find it in Isaiah. Please observe the priority of the Jews in this prophetic passage, the inclusion of the Gentiles is secondary.

Prophecy and Acts are in perfect harmony:

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.

I highlighted important words and phrases from Acts 13:46-47 and it is critical we now focus on one of them:

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

As we have seen from Paul's own words, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision and preached to Jews first and AFTER they had rejected the message THEN the gospel of the promise made to the Fathers (Acts 13:32) is given to the Nations in that locality. This precedent had already been established earlier in the Acts through Peter, remember?

Peter preached to a Gentile in the land after Israel in the land had rejected the message. The unconverted Saul was wreaking havoc on the faithful, Saul was the instrument of Israel's rejection and despite the fact he was converted in Acts 9, he represented the national hardness against the gospel. This national hardness was manifested by the murder of Stephen in Acts 7 and the murder of others during that time (Acts 26:10-11). Peter preached to a gentile in the land after these events, after Israel had rejected the Lord's message and messengers.

Thus it is no surprise to find in Acts 13 Paul turning to Gentiles after Israel outside the land rejected the message as well.

To sum up this lesson we find Paul's ministry to the Gentiles during the Acts period was;

1. Anticipated historically.
2. Foretold by the Prophets.
3. Secondary to his ministry to Israel.
4. Initiated after the rejection of the message by the Jews in specific locations.

None of these things can be found as instrumental in Paul's post Acts ministry. Indeed, they are so powerfully and obviously different that we are amazed they are not more widely acknowledged. Perhaps tradition is a more blinding than we realize. We have been taught for so long that the church started in the Gospels or Pentecost that for some it is difficult to see these differences.

Next lesson we shall see why the Gentiles were included in salvation during the Acts period. We shall find this to be another incredible difference in Paul's ministries during Acts and after Acts.

There is only one man in the New Testament declared to be the Apostle to the Nations or Gentiles and that is the Apostle Paul. In this survey of Paul's ministries we are not remotely suggesting that Paul is above His Lord, cp 1Cor.1:13, rather we are showing the importance of Paul and the stark differences in his ministries.

During the Acts period Paul preached to the Jew first then the Gentiles and 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 his ministry to Israel.
4. Initiated after the rejection of the message by the Jews in specific locations.

None of these dispensational features exist in Paul's post Acts letters of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2Timothy, Titus and Philemon. We Gentiles are not saved today because of the four things above.

The inclusion of the Gentile during the Acts period was not a proclamation of a change of dispensation but a method used by God to provoke Israel to repentance and consequently receive the blessings promised for her. This is a critical truth unknown in Christianity and some dispensational circles and is the focus of this lesson.

Let us revisit the first recorded miracle through Paul when a Jew, resisting the message, was partially blinded;

[Act 13:11](#) And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is on you. And you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a while. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell on him, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

[Act 13:12](#) Then, seeing the thing happening, the proconsul (Gentile) believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Like Bar-jesus and Paul before him, the Nation of Israel had been withstanding the message; was unfaithful. Paul was partially blinded as an act of mercy and at Acts 13 Elymas suffers the same fate. Elymas is picture of the Nation from that point onwards in the Acts administration. Bar-jesus was stumbling around, so was the Nation, did this mean they were cut off or God had changed His mind and introduced something new? No! Remember these passages?

[Rom.3:3-4a](#) What if some of them (the Jews) were unfaithful? Their unfaithfulness cannot cancel God's faithfulness, can it? Of course not! (ISV)

The fact that Israel was unfaithful did not mean God would be unfaithful to all His promises made to their fathers. God was not going to introduce something new because Israel was not responding. God's patience with Israel had not expired with the Apple of His Eye at Acts 13 or at the writing of Romans see Roms.11:1-2.

Notice carefully in Acts 13:12 that when a Jew is partially blinded a Gentile is saved and this is understood in the context of the Jew "seeking some to lead him by the hand". The Gentile Proconsul believed as a result of the Lord's mighty hand on this Jew.

Let us see if the Word maintains this theme, that is, that the Gentiles were saved during the Acts period because Israel was stumbling and Gentiles were saved to "lead them by the hand". We might ask where this leading was directed and this too will become perfectly clear as we search and see.

Staying in Paul's Acts period letter to the Romans we find these statements:

[Rom 11:8](#) As it is written, "To this day God has given them a spirit of deep sleep. Their eyes do not see, and their ears do not hear."

[Rom 11:11](#) And so I ask, "They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?" Of course not! On the contrary, because of their stumbling, salvation has come to the gentiles to make the Jews jealous.

[Rom 11:12](#) Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their fall means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

Notice the same theme here as Acts 13, the Jews were partially blinded, stumbling and because of this Gentiles were being saved to make the Jews envious. The "leading by the hand" must be considered in Paul's words "their (Israel's) full inclusion". Now does this mean the Gentiles were leading Israel into the church which is His Body? Not at all, please read Romans 11:15-16 and 24-27 where Paul says that it is easy for God to graft repentant Israelites back into the Olive tree which is not the Church which is his Body. The salvation in view in Romans 11 was Christ in Zion, the same gospel Paul preached in Acts 13:32-35, see Psalm 2:6-7.

Gentiles were included in salvation during the Acts period because of the 4 things listed earlier in this lesson but now we can add 2 new reasons:

5. Gentiles were included because Israel was partially blinded and stumbling.
6. Gentiles were included 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.

Gentiles were not saved to lead Israel by the hand into the church which is His Body which was not revealed until after Acts 28. No, Gentiles were saved to "lead Israel by the hand" through provocation to envy unto repentance and their blessing. The blessing in view was the "promises made to the fathers" and this position is strongly supported when we remember Paul's words in the Acts period letter to the Galatians 3:8, 29 and here:

[Gal 3:9](#) So then those of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

But the Word of God provides even more resounding evidence. Let us revisit the Scripture James uses when he confirms the salvation of a Gentile (Cornelius) as being according to God's revealed purposes:

[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,

[Act 15:16](#) "After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which has fallen down; and I will build again its ruins, and I will set it up,

[Act 15:17](#) so those men who are left might seek after the Lord, and all the nations on whom My name has been called, says the Lord, who does all these things."

This is a quote from Amos 9:11-12 where the prophet says Gentiles would be the called of the Lord (cp Roms.9:23-24).

But Amos includes Gentiles in the passage which speaks also of Israel's restoration:

[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.

[Amo 9:15](#) And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, says Jehovah your God.

We cannot begin to suggest that Gentiles were saved during Acts to "lead Israel by the hand" into the Church which is his Body in the light of these passages. Scripture says Gentiles were saved to provoke Israel so that their full restoration would come in.

Let us turn to our apostle for another conclusive passage that he uses as his authority to turn to the Gentiles;

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

[Act 13:47](#) For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have set You to be a light of the nations, for salvation to the end of the earth."

This quote is from Isaiah 49:6 and we include an exciting portion of that chapter which is clearly about the restoration of Israel. As you read this passage you might like to consider Gal.1:15.

[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.

Paul's authority to turn to the gentiles during the Acts period was directly from a prophecy about the restoration of Israel. Gentiles were not saved during Acts to lead Israel into the Body of Christ; the evidence is overwhelming.

In Acts 13:33 Paul quotes Ps.2 which speaks of The Lord enthroned on ZION and ruling the world, God's faithfulness to David made sure. Compare Ps.89. In Acts 13:34, Paul quotes Isaiah 55 which is another passage prophesying Israel's restoration and God's faithfulness to His Word for David and Israel. In Acts 13:47 Paul quotes Isaiah 49 another passage foretelling Israel's restoration according to God's faithfulness for her, please read all these passages.

Now let's turn back to Romans 11 where Paul uses yet another passage from Isaiah:

[Rom 11:26-27](#) 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. For this *is* My covenant with them, when I have taken away their sins."

[Rom 11:28-29](#) Indeed as regards the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes. But as regards the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the free gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

Rom 11:32 For God has shut up all in unbelief, so that He might show mercy to all.

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?** (Is.40:13)

Rom 11:35 Or who first gave to Him, and it will be repaid to him?

Rom 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things; to Him be glory forever! Amen.

Oh yes, Israel, like Bar-jesus was stumbling under temporary blindness but they would be saved just like Paul. God's gifts and calling are without change of mind. What did Paul say in Romans 3?

Rom.3:3-4a What if some of them (the Jews) were unfaithful? Their unfaithfulness cannot cancel God's faithfulness, can it? Of course not! (ISV)

What does Paul's doxology include in Romans 11? Yet another quote from Isaiah, this time chapter 40 which opens like this "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God" and includes this great statement by God to His own faithfulness regarding Israel;

Isa 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God shall stand forever.

Isa 40:9 Go up for yourself on the high mountain, bringer of good tidings to Zion. Lift up your voice with strength, O you who bring good tidings to Jerusalem; lift up, do not be afraid. Say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God! See also verses 10-11 and 3-5.

How much consistent evidence can the word of Truth present? The inclusion of the Gentiles during the Acts period was according to the following:

1. Anticipated historically.
2. Foretold by the Prophets.
3. Secondary to his ministry to Israel.
4. Initiated after the rejection of the message by the Jews in specific locations.
5. Gentiles were included because Israel was partially blinded and stumbling.
6. Gentiles were included 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. Israel's partial blindness was an act of mercy.

To include the post Acts administration given to Paul after Israel were put aside at Acts 28 back in these clear historic and prophetic settings of the Acts period is a monumental misunderstanding of Scripture. Our church did not start at the cross, did not start at Acts 2 and certainly did not start with Paul during the Acts period.

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.

In this series of lessons devoted to the salvation of the Gentiles during the Acts period, 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.

Last lesson we proved that “the fullness of the Gentiles” could not be the present dispensational truth of The Mystery as found in Ephesians three. By definition, the one new man of Ephesians 2 is created from BOTH Jew and Gentile (Eph.2:11-16), not just Gentiles and the salvation of the Gentiles during Acts was according to prophecies which spoke of Israel’s restoration, not the unveiling of something about which the prophets knew nothing.

In this lesson we shall examine the near context of this phrase as found in the quote above. What can we discover from Romans 11 itself which will shed light on “the fullness of the Gentiles”?

It has been my pleasure to encourage each reader to always examine the OT contexts of any passage included in NT Scripture and we have another set of astounding OT contexts here in Romans 11:26-27. In this section of Romans 11 we have Paul combining OT Scriptures, Isaiah 59:20-21, 27:9 and possibly Psalm 53:6. Here is Romans 11:25-27 followed by the OT passages he is inspired to use;

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.

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. (Isaiah 59:20 with a glance to Psalm 53:6)

Rom 11:27 For this is My covenant with them, when I have taken away their sins." (Isaiah 59:21, 27:9)

Isa 59:20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, says Jehovah.

Isa 59:21 As for Me, this *is* My covenant with them, says Jehovah; My Spirit that is on you, and My Words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says Jehovah, from now on and forever.

Isa 27:9 By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this *is* all the fruit to take away his sin; .....

Psa 53:6 Who will give from Zion the salvation of Israel? When God brings back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

In Romans 11:28-32 Paul reminds his readers that unfaithful Israel were indeed enemies of the gospel but were beloved for the fathers’ sakes. He also tells them that God had shut all unfaithful Israel in unbelief in order that He could show mercy to them all. Just because Israel were enemies of the gospel did not mean God’s faithfulness for them was terminated, see Romans 3:3-4a, 9:6a & 9:16. God’s calling was without change of mind, Roms.11:29.

Now, it should not surprise us to see in the OT passages Paul uses, that this is exactly the same theme. Israel was unfaithful but God’s faithfulness remained insofar as He would come to them and forgive and restore. Look at these passages from those prophecies Paul uses in the context of “the fullness of the gentiles”;

Isa 59:1 Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened so that it cannot save, nor is His ear heavy so that it cannot hear.

Isa 59:2 But your iniquities have come between you and your God, and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, from hearing.

Isa 59:16 And He saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore His own arm brought salvation to Him; and His righteousness sustained Him.

Isa 59:17 For He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head. And He put on the **garments of vengeance** for clothing, and was covered with zeal like a cloak.

Isa 59:18 According to *their* deeds, accordingly He will repay; **fury to His foes**, deed for deed to His enemies. He will repay their deeds to the coastlands.

Isa 59:19 So they shall fear the name of Jehovah from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun. **When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Jehovah shall make him flee.**

Isa 59:20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, says Jehovah.

In Isaiah 59 we find Israel full of sin but God, who is faithful, will come to Zion and deliver them. Would my reader please note that in Is.59:19, the very verse prior to the one Paul uses in Roms.11:26, the prophet speaks of “the enemy” being routed. I wonder if this corresponds to “the fullness of the gentiles”.

Let us now turn to Isaiah 27:9 which Paul combines with 59:20-21 in Romans 11:26-27. We set the context by ignoring the chapter break and posting the theme of the prophet thus;

**Isa 26:20** Come, my people, enter into your rooms and shut your doors around you; hide for a little moment, until the fury has passed by.

**Isa 26:21** For behold, Jehovah comes out of His place to punish the people of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall reveal her blood, and shall no more cover her dead.

**Isa 27:1** In that day Jehovah with His great and fierce and strong sword shall punish the sea-monster, the darting serpent, the sea-monster, that twisting serpent; and He shall kill the monster in the sea.

**Isa 27:2** In that day sing to her, a delightful vineyard.

**Isa 27:6** He shall cause those who come from Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world *with* fruit.

**Isa 27:9** By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this *is* all the fruit to take away his sin; ...

**Isa 27:12** And it shall be, in that day Jehovah shall thresh from the stream of the river Euphrates to the torrent of Egypt, and **you shall be gathered one by one, O sons of Israel.**

**Isa 27:13** And it shall be, in that day the **great ram's horn** shall be blown, and those perishing in the land of Assyria shall come, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt shall come and shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

Once again in Isaiah 26:20-27:13 we have God’s faithfulness, Israel’s forgiveness, restoration and an enemy destroyed.

In this passage of Isaiah 27 we note also the re-gathering of Israel but wait, there’s more, did my reader notice a TRUMPET in verse 13? During Acts Paul wrote of the Lord’s return at the feast of trumpets, the lawless one being destroyed and a gathering in the clouds and air as the Lord descended to the earth. The Deliverer’s throne is in ZION and He descends out of heaven to Zion after the “fullness of the Gentiles”. How wonderfully consistent is Paul during Acts with the prophets of Israel. Note again, in Romans 11 the “fullness of the Gentiles” is in a prophetic context of the Lord’s return and enemies destroyed.

Finally, lets us consider Psalm 53 (& see Psalm 14:7) which contains words so similar to those of Isaiah 59 and Romans 11:26;

**Psa 53:6** Who will give from Zion the salvation of Israel? When God brings back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Once again, both Psalm 53 (and 14) contain references to the faithfulness of God who will save out of Zion despite the unfaithfulness of Israel. Psalm 53:5 speaks of God scattering the bones of them who camp against Israel. Here is another OT context of enemies being destroyed prior to Israel’s joy and gladness.

To sum up this lesson we have found the OT passages used by Paul in Romans 11:25-27 show exactly the same theme as Paul is unfolding in Romans 9-11. This theme is that despite Israel’s unfaithfulness, God is faithful and the Deliverer will come to them out of Zion. In the OT passages Paul uses, we find the prophets speaking of the destruction of enemies at the return of the Deliverer. The kinsman redeemer is not only the restorer of the inheritance but also the avenger of blood.

How can this help us to understand “the fullness of the gentiles”? Next lesson we will build on this Scriptural foundation from Romans 11 by comparing the phrase in another NT passage.

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 Gal.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.

There are many references to maximize this lesson and as with every lesson, please open your Bibles and find and read each passage given. I have attached a chart of Romans 11:11-36 beside lesson 12.

Thus far in this series we have discovered very clearly that just because Gentiles were saved during the Acts period does not mean “the church” had started. The greatest blinkers to truth are the following traditions;

1. Christ came to “start” the church in the Gospels.
2. Israel was cast aside at the cross or Pentecost.
3. Pentecost is the “birthday” of the “the church” and
4. Paul was gradually given the truth for today during Acts.

These are far from the truth. Pentecost was a Jewish Feast with Jews only participating. The gospel was preached to the Gentiles from Acts 10 onwards but we have seen this was nothing outside of historical precedence and prophecy. Gentiles were saved during the Acts period according to prophecy which spoke of Israel’s restoration and deliverance. Gentiles were not saved during Acts because God was gradually introducing a previously hidden dispensation (Eph.3) which was still hidden when Paul wrote Romans.

The truths concerning our calling, “the church which is His Body”, were not revealed to Paul until after Acts 28. Romans was written before Acts 28. As we consider the phrase, “the fullness of the Gentiles” as found in Romans 11:25 we must not go forward into Ephesians and Colossians for understanding but rather back into prophecy and the purposes of God for the world through Israel.

During Acts, Israel remained as God’s elect and despite the fact that the nation was rejecting the message, God was holding out His hands to them (Roms.10:19-21); Israel was unfaithful but this did not negate the faithfulness of God towards them, Roms.3:3-4a & 11:29.

We begin by noting carefully that AFTER the “fullness of the Gentiles” THEN all Israel will be saved WHEN the Deliverer comes out of ZION. The “fullness of the Gentiles” cannot possibly relate to the dispensation of today because all Israel are not saved today and our hope is not the Deliverer coming out of Zion:

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.

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.

Last lesson we considered that the “fullness of the Gentiles” might be the final Gentile power which has controlling influence over the land of Israel and Jerusalem. We linked Luke 21:24 with Romans 11 because of the similarity of phrasing;

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**.

Luke 21, Matt.24, 1Cor.15, 1Thess.4, 2Thess.2 and Revelation are about the events just prior to the Coming of the Lord to the earth at the blast of the last trumpet. The Lord returns to deliver Israel from the hand of her enemies as found here and other prophecies;

Zec 12:8 In that day Jehovah shall defend around the people of Jerusalem. ...

Zec 12:9 And it shall be in that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Zec 12:10 And I will pour on the house of David, and on the people of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayers. And they shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be bitter over Him, as the bitterness over the first-born.

The nations which have control over Israel are depicted in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream as found in Daniel chapter 2 which should be read. Please note the explanation of the dream as follows;

Dan 2:28 But there is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets and makes known to King Nebuchadnezzar **what shall be in the latter days**. ...

This vision of Nebuchadnezzar relates to the order of Gentile nations, all of who had or will have control over Israel. In verse 34 & 35 of Daniel 2 the rock cut without hands (the Lord Christ), smashes the feet (the final Gentile power) and the entire image is destroyed, not just the feet. This could suggest that all the powers of the image will be in existence at the end. When Christ returns, Gentile dominion will be removed and Israel will be the head and not the tail. Then the Rock sets up a Kingdom on earth which will never be removed. The Lord reigns out of Zion, the Kingdom of Heaven is not in Heaven, but originates from there.

Nebuchadnezzar's image of Gentile dominion is further unfolded and explained in Daniel chapters 7-12. But for now all we need to note is that the final Gentile power, the feet and toes of clay and iron, is the fourth beast of Daniel 7:3-7 and Revelation 13. This fourth beast has ten horns three of which are uprooted by a little horn. This little horn is the antichrist who leads the army of this last coalition beast (Gentile power) into the Promised Land. Nebuchadnezzar's vision is about the latter days and a King who destroys Jerusalem. This is what Nebuchadnezzar (the Head of Gold) did at the beginning of Gentile dominion of prophecy. The image starts with a king who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and ends with a king who sacks Jerusalem and desecrates the Temple.

Notice this "little horn" in Dan.7:8 & 20-21 spoke great things and made war with the saints (compare Rev.13:1, 6-7) and please note that Christ's return in Daniel 7:22 follows this short reign of the little horn. Please also read Dan.8:9-12 & 23-25 where this same little horn (the antichrist) disrupts Israel's Temple services and even opposing the Lord Himself. This little horn sets up an image which desolates the holy place. You can read about this in Dan. 8:13, 9:27, 11:31, & Matt.24:15. While this abomination is not mentioned in 2Thess.2 it is part of the events described by Paul as follows;

2Th 2:3 Let not anyone deceive you by any means. For that Day shall not come unless there first comes a falling away, and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition,

2Th 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, setting himself forth, that he is God.

2Th 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already working, only he is now holding back until it comes out of the midst.

2Th 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming,

Notice in 2Thess.2 the Lord's return destroys this lawless one which is the exact order in Daniel. The harmony of Daniel, Matt.24 and 2Thess.2 is impossible to miss. There is a falling away within Israel because of false prophets and false messiahs; see Matt.24:4-5, 11 & 24. The culmination of this deception is the antichrist that comes out of the midst of all this deception. He deceives Israel into signing a covenant, after 3.5 years he breaks it, cancels Israel's Temple services and sets up his image. This is the point when the Lord's advice to the faithful Israelites (not our church) to flee out of Jerusalem into the mountains of Israel, is to be taken. The tribulation begins as antichrist attempts to obliterate the Jews. After the tribulation, THEN the Lord returns to the earth destroying this lawless one. And so we return to Romans 11 emphasizing the word deliverer in the following 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. (Compare Luke 21:20, 24).

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.

If the fullness of the Gentiles is to be understood as the culmination of Gentile power over Israel then it cannot possibly relate to the post Acts truths of Ephesians and Colossians which have nothing to do with the "the abomination of desolation", "the deliverer coming out of Zion" or the image dreamt and explained to Nebuchadnezzar.

This is my current preference of understanding for this term however, next lesson we shall consider two other possibilities for "the fullness of the Gentiles".

We are coming to the close of this series where we have been examining the salvation of the Gentiles during the Acts period. We are considering Romans 11:25-26 where the phrase “fullness of Gentiles (nations)” occurs.

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.

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.

At the time of writing Romans, Israel remained as God’s people. They were stumbling in the hardness and blindness God had placed upon them. God had hardened the nation of Israel as an act of mercy, see Roms.9:15-16 and 11:28-32. It is very important to note that in Romans Paul is not speaking of anything new, but anticipating Israel’s restoration and salvation, see Roms.3:3-4a, 9:4-5, 11:12, 15 and 26-29. Paul affirms in Romans that “all Israel will be saved” not the exact opposite that God will bring in something new which has nothing to do with Israel.

Last lesson we considered the “fullness of the Gentiles” as being the final dominant Gentile power over Israel and Jerusalem and the lawless King who leads its armies. We noticed that according to prophecy, the Lord returns to deliver Israel after the “sudden destruction” this evil one brings, see 1Thess.5:3 and 2Thess.2:3-4. When the Lord returns He reigns over the world out of Zion and so Israel will indeed be delivered and saved after the ultimate Gentile power is destroyed.

Two more alternatives are offered today as to what “fullness of the Gentiles” might mean and ultimately it is up to you dear reader to decide the best interpretation from the context.

The first consideration places two similar phrases side by side. The “fullness of the gentiles” and “the fullness of Israel” as found in Romans 11:11-12 & 25-26. A structure of Romans 11 is included below.

Here are these verses in parallel;

Rom 11:11 And so I ask, "They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?" Of course not! On the contrary, because of their stumbling, **SALVATION** has come to the gentiles to make the Jews jealous.

Rom 11:12 Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their fall means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion (**FULLNESS**) mean! ISV.

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.

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel shall be **SAVED**;

The Gentiles, who had been previously cast aside by God, had received salvation during the Acts period because of Israel’s stumbling. Way back in Genesis 10-11, the Gentiles were scattered at Babel with Israel in the centre, see Genesis 10:32, 11:8-9 and Deut.32:8-9. Now this had been reversed. The cast off Gentiles were now accepted by God because Israel had stumbled and had found “fullness”. The Gentiles were made righteous by grace and looked forward to the hope of that time which was Christ REIGNING as King over them, see Roms.15:12 & Isaiah 11.

Now look at Paul’s arguments in Romans 11;

Rom 11:30 For as you also then disbelieved God, but now have been shown mercy through their disbelief,

Rom 11:31 even so these also have not believed now, so that through your mercy they may also obtain mercy.

Rom 11:32 For God has shut up all in unbelief, so that He might show mercy to all.

Israel was stumbling, hardened and blinded by God, but not as a permanent casting aside, rather as an act of mercy. Israel had not found righteousness and salvation but they would find it at the Lord’s return. They would find “fullness”; righteousness, salvation and acceptance by God when the deliverer came out of Zion as their King of Kings, restoring the Kingdom to them.

Can we see this parallel? In the past the Gentiles had not received mercy but were receiving it during the Acts period and so were accepted and filled full with Israel’s blessings. The Gentiles were accepted because Israel

was in unbelief. But Israel would also be accepted because of that very mercy shown to the Gentiles. The key in this mercy exchange is Israel, not the bringing in of something new.

Paul rejoiced at the conclusion of Romans 11 as he praised God's faithfulness. Paul knew that because God is faithful to His Word Israel would be filled full with all He had promised her. Consider these verses please and follow the theme which is God's faithfulness to Israel despite its rejection of Christ;

Rom 3:3 What if some of them were unfaithful? Their unfaithfulness cannot cancel God's faithfulness, can it?

Rom 3:4 Of course not! ISV.

Rom 9:3 For I myself was wishing to be accursed from Christ for my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Rom 9:4 who are Israelites; to whom *belong* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Rom 9:5 whose *are* the fathers, and of whom *is* the Christ according to flesh, He being God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Rom 9:6 Not however that the Word of God has failed,

Rom 9:15 For He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Rom 9:16 So then *it is* not of the *one* willing, nor of the *one* running, but of God, the *One* showing mercy

Rom 11:11 And so I ask, "They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?" Of course not! ISV.

Rom 11:12 But if their slipping away *is* the riches of *the* world, and their default is *the* riches of *the* nations, how much more their fullness?

Rom 11:15 For if their casting away *is* the reconciling of *the* world, what *is* the reception except life from *the* dead?

Rom 11:16 For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, also the branches.

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved;

Rom 11:29 For the free gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

Rom 11:32 For God has shut up all in unbelief, so that He might show mercy to all.

The Gentiles had been saved during the Acts period and had been filled with blessing and hope. Despite Israel's rejection and unfaithfulness, Israel also would be filled with blessing when their hope is realized; when Christ returned. His return was expected at that time when both Gentiles and Jews would find their joy complete by God's faithfulness to His Word of Promise to Israel. God had promised Abraham he would be the father of many nations and Paul writes about this in Romans. 4:10-22. Abraham's son (foreseen in Isaac) did suffer on that cross but He would reign over Israel and the nations out of Zion.

The fullness of the Gentiles could be the bringing back into acceptance of them, their salvation, their blessing and hope, all in Christ, Israel's Priest King. The fullness of Israel is the sure and certain hope Paul held during Acts that they too would be brought back into acceptance from their stumbling hardened condition, they would be saved and blessed and their hope realized through their Priest King.

The second consideration of the "fullness of the Gentiles" is related to this concept above. The Gentiles were saved during Acts only because Israel was stumbling, and the Gentiles were saved to provoke Israel to jealousy as this verse shows;

Rom 11:11 And so I ask, "They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?" Of course not! On the contrary, because of their stumbling, salvation has come to the gentiles to make the Jews jealous.

This provocation purpose is drawn out by Paul in his use of the Olive tree as an agricultural example. Please read Roms.11:16-24. Readers might be interested to know there was a gardening book published about AD 40 which spoke of grafting wild olive branches into the unfruitful tree to stimulate it to fruit bearing. However, the olive orchardist would know there is a limit to the wild olive branches one could graft in, just as there is a limit to the number of grafts used on a wild lemon stock. Thus the fullness of the Gentiles could refer to the number of Gentiles necessary to bring Israel to bear fruit; to provoke them to repentance, even a jealous one. In this matter it is interesting to note the record of Luke in 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. But since indeed you put it far from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the nations.

Act 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us, *saying*, "I have set You to be a light of the nations, for salvation to the end of the earth."

Act 13:48 And hearing, the nations rejoiced and glorified the Word of the Lord. And as many as were **ordained** to eternal life believed.

Paul tells us in Romans 9:18 that God will have mercy on those He decides to show mercy, and while I am not suggesting God chooses all who will be saved, He had a purpose in view with the salvation of the Gentiles during Acts. The fullness of the Gentiles could refer to the number required to bring about Israel's response, how many wild olive branches would it take to stimulate the tree to fruit bearing.

Next lesson we will bring this series to a conclusion. May the Lord bring you a harvest of knowledge as you search the Scriptures daily.

**Romans 11:11-36** (Based on a structure by Mr. C.H.Welch in his book "Just, and the Justifier" pg 271)

Mercy on The Gentiles to Salvation. Hardness but Mercy on Israel to Salvation.

(The dispensational truths of Romans are not the post Acts Mystery Truths of Ephesians and Colossians-we Gentiles are not graft in today)

**A. Roms.11.11-25 Israel stumbles, Gentiles saved, *Israel's restoration in view.***

- B.** a. :11 Israel stumbles Gentiles saved, provoke Israel to jealousy  
b. :12 Israel's stumble, Gentile riches.  
c. :12 *Israel's fullness*  
a. :13-:14 Apostle to the Gentiles, save some of Israel  
b. :15 Israel's "casting away" (loss), reconciliation of the world,  
c. :15 *Israel's reception*, life from the dead.

**C. :16** Holy Firstfruit, Branches, Lump (Roms.9:21) and Root.

- B.** a. :17 Israelites broken off, Gentiles graft in (enjoy root and fatness of Olive, not later Ephesians truths)  
b. :18 Gentiles support  
c. :18 *The Olive tree root*  
a. :19-21 Unbelieving Israelites broken off, believing Gentiles graft in  
b. :22. Goodness to Gentiles, severity to Israelites.  
c. :23-24 *Graft Israelites in again*  
a. :25 Israel partially blinded  
b. The fullness of the Gentiles  
c. :25 *all Israel saved*  
:26 *The Deliverer, Zion*, turn away ungodliness (Isaiah 59)

**A. Roms.11.27-32 Mercy to Gentiles, *Israel's salvation in view.***

**C. :27-29**

1. :27 (unconditional) Covenant, take away sins
2. :28 Israel, enemies for Gentiles' sake
2. :28 Israel, loved for the fathers' sake
1. :29 gifts and calling of God irrevocable

- B.** a. :30 Gentiles in the past  
b. :30 but now, Israel unbelieving Gentiles receive mercy  
c. :31 now *Israel* unbelieving but *will obtain mercy*, through Gentile mercy

**C. :27-29**

2. :32 Israel, shut up in unbelief by God
1. :32 Mercy (Roms.3:3-4a) on them all (Israel, Roms.9:6-7)

**A. Roms.11.33-36 Doxology. *Israel's restoration in view.*** (Isaiah 40)

This lesson concludes our series on the Salvation of the Gentiles during the Acts period. I am praying this summary will help us all to appreciate afresh and with Scriptural certainty that the Acts period was not the early history of “the church”.

We have been told repeatedly that Paul took the “gospel” into the entire world from Acts 13 onwards, but in fact his custom was he spoke in the synagogue of the Jews to the Jews on the Sabbath days;

[Act 17:1](#) And traveling through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

[Act 17:2](#) And according to Paul's custom, he went in to them and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures on three sabbaths,

[Act 17:3](#) opening and setting forth that Christ must have suffered, and to have risen again from *the* dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach to you is Christ. (Please compare Lk.4;16)

Paul's gospel to Israel was that the One they had crucified was their Messiah and this is what Paul preached from Acts 9 (9:20, 22) to Acts 28 (28:23). Read carefully Paul's gospel of Acts 13:14-41. This gospel has nothing to do with our “church” but is all about the promises made to Israel's fathers and the focus being that the crucified One was raised to sit on David's throne. Let us not be troubled that in this Jewish context; in this earthly purpose of God that forgiveness of sins and justification are freely proclaimed in Israel's High Priest King. These consequences of our Lord's crucifixion are not the exclusive preserve of the later calling given to Paul after Israel were set aside at Acts 28. Abraham was made righteous by faith, a joy found in Christ before the Law, see Roms.4:1-14.

But wait, Gentiles were saved in Acts 13. Surely this means the church which is His body started? Absolutely not! A Gentile could be made righteous through faith by the gracious reckoning of God, see the Romans passage above. Righteousness now freely available during Acts is not the Mystery of Ephesians 3. So why were the Gentiles saved during the Acts period? Here is a summary of our findings in this series. Previous lessons can be found here [www.bibleunderstanding.com/pastissues.htm](http://www.bibleunderstanding.com/pastissues.htm)

The Scriptures are clear, the Gentiles were saved and included in salvation during the Acts period according to the following;

**1. The salvation of the Gentiles was anticipated historically.** They had been included in salvation with Israel in the past;

[Exo 12:48](#) And when a stranger shall stay with you, and desires to keep the Passover to Jehovah, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it. And he shall be as one that is born in the land. And no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.

[Exo 12:49](#) There shall be one law to the native, and to the visitor that stays among you.

Israel was to be the light through which the world would be attracted to their God and Saviour. God did not change the dispensation just because Gentiles were saved in the Acts period. We Gentiles are not saved with Israel today; not graft into the Olive tree. There is no Israel nationally today but the One New Man, the creation first revealed in the post Acts letter of Paul, Ephesians chapter two.

**2. The salvation of the Gentiles was foretold by the Prophets.** That Gentiles would be saved was clearly a fulfillment of prophecy;

[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.

**3. The salvation of the Gentiles during Acts was secondary to Paul's ministry to Israel.** Paul's “missionary” journeys were to the Jew first, his custom was to preach in the synagogues on the Sabbath. He clearly tells us that Israel had an advantage during Acts;

[Rom 1:16](#) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the **Jew first** and also to the Greek.

[Rom 3:1](#) Then what *is* the superiority of the Jew? Or what *is* the profit of circumcision?

[Rom 3:2](#) Much, by every way! Chiefly, indeed, because they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

His gospel proclaimed Christ crucified dead and buried but resurrected as Israel's King to sit on David's throne in Jerusalem. This is not the dispensational setting of today as revealed in Ephesians & Colossians. During Acts Paul emphasized that in Israel's Priest-King; the Saviour, was forgiveness and righteousness.

**4. The salvation of the Gentiles during Acts was after the Jews rejected the message in specific locations.** Peter was sent to Cornelius many years after Pentecost, many years of Jewish rejection in the land. Paul went to the Jews first and when they rejected the message, then he turned to the Gentiles. Only on a few occasions did Paul preach to Gentiles independently of Israel or a Synagogue.

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

This is not the dispensational setting of today as revealed in Ephesians & Colossians. The message today does not go to Jews first then to Gentiles afterwards.

**5. The salvation of the Gentiles during Acts followed God's judgment on Israel which resulted in partial blindness and stumbling.** We have been told repeatedly that Israel was cast aside at the cross or Pentecost and the majority have believed it because repetition of an error appears to be truth because it is repeated so often. The Word clearly says Israel was not cast aside until Acts 28.

[Rom 10:21](#) But to Israel He says, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobeying and gainsaying people."

[Rom 11:1](#) I say then, Did not God put away His people? Let it not be said! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

[Rom 11:2](#) God did not thrust out His people whom He foreknew.

In Acts 9 a zealous Jew is struck with temporary blindness and stumbles then Peter preaches to a gentile. In Acts 12 Israel's King is struck dead and in Acts 13 a Jew is struck partially blind and he stumbles about, then Paul preaches to Jews and Gentiles. This was the condition of Israel nationally right through to the end of Acts, partially blinded and stumbling about and Gentiles were included because of it, see Romans 11:11. This is not the dispensational setting of today as revealed in Ephesians & Colossians; we Gentiles are not saved because Israel is partially blinded and stumbling.

**6. The salvation of the Gentiles during Acts was to make Israel jealous.** If ever there was an Acts period dispensational truth which separated Paul's Acts period ministry and writings from his post Acts ministry and writings it is this one.

[Rom 11:11](#) I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But by their transgression (stumbling in some versions), salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. EMTV.

We are not saved today to make Israel jealous and note Paul's apostleship was to the same end as shown in Roms.11:13-14.

**7. The salvation of the Gentiles during Acts was according to prophecy which anticipated Israel's restoration.** It is a testimony to the strength of our bad traditions that we continue to think that the salvation of Gentiles during Acts must mean the start of something new. On the contrary, the prophetic announcements of Gentile inclusion also proclaimed the joyous restoration of Israel, not the bringing in of something completely different. Here is a passage from Amos quoted by James in Acts 15 when the Jews discussed the inclusion of the Gentiles;

[Amo 9:13](#) "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.

[Amo 9:14](#) I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

James quoted Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:16-17.

Here is another passage from Isaiah 49 which Paul quoted in Acts 13 as his authority to turn to the Gentiles.

[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.

Paul quoted Is.49:6 in Acts 13:47. How can Paul's turning to the Gentiles in Acts 13 be seen as the introduction of our present calling when Isaiah says it was a time of Israel's restoration?

**8. The salvation of the Gentiles during Acts was in a time when God was being faithful to Israel.** When Paul wrote to the Romans he declared that the “gifts and calling of God” were without change of mind, Roms.11:29. God’s faithfulness to Israel was not dependent on their belief in and acceptance of the Lord as their Messiah and Saviour. All Israel will be saved was Paul’s confident affirmation in Roms.11:25-26. Paul wasn’t being two faced or hiding truth from those readers when he said God had not changed his mind regarding Israel.

Rom 3:3 For what if some did not believe? Surely their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God?

Rom 3:4 Certainly not!

Gentiles were being saved in a time when God was faithfully holding out His hands to His people, ready to send Christ back to them as promised through Peter in Acts 3:17-20. The imminent return of Christ, the hope of Israel, was the hope of the Acts period. Roms.11:11-12, 15:4-13 and 16:20.

Conclusion.

The salvation of the Gentiles during the Acts period must not be seen as “evidence” that the Lord had started something new. Our tradition that the book of Acts records the history of the early “church” must be discarded for the confusion it is. Our tradition that the Acts was a transition period during which Paul was gradually given truth for today must also be discarded as scripturally baseless.

The Acts period was an extended opportunity for the nation of Israel to respond to the grace of God and acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. The book of Acts covers approximately 40 years, a period of probation, and at the end of the book the final appeal is given to the dispersed Israelites in Rome. They, like so many before them, argued about the truth and Paul was inspired to pronounce the judgmental prophecy of Isaiah 6 against the nation. Israel was set aside, God’s purposes for her postponed. Then the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles without Israel and the terms and conditions of today’s dispensation were given to one man, Paul.

Praise God for the post Acts ministry of Paul. May we all rejoice in its riches of grace where Jew and Gentile have been created one new man. Where our inheritance has nothing to do with the promises made to Israel’s fathers and our inheritance and hope cannot be found in prophecy.

Brian R Kelson

[brianacts28@gmail.com](mailto:brianacts28@gmail.com)

[www.acts28.net](http://www.acts28.net)