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B0607 – February 19, 2006 – Major Bible Themes
Chapter 41 – The Gentiles in History and Prophecy

I. The Gentiles in the Plan of God

Historically and prophetically there are three major divisions of humanity.ⁱ

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;

1. Jews
2. Greeks or Gentiles
3. Church of God

To these human divisions can be added the angelic divisions: elect (1 Tim 5:21) and fallen (Rev 12:4), who serve in various capacities and play a role in human history and prophecy.

God's purpose for these three major divisions of humanity are distinct. God's purposes for Israel include:

- To record and preserve the inspired words of God (Rom 3:2)
- To be the channel through which the Messiah would come (Rev 12:1-5)
- To be a holy people (Exod 19:6)

God's purposes for the Church of God include:

- To serve as a teaching device for the angels (Eph 3:10)
- To reveal God's grace (Tit 2:11; 1 Pt 4:10)
- To carry the ministry of reconciliation to the world (2 Cor 5:17-21)
- To make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19-20)

God's purposes for the Gentiles are quite different. Primarily they are:

- To reveal God's sovereignty (Exod 9:16; Rom 9:22ff)
- To reveal God's omnipotence (Exod 9:16; Rom 9:22ff)

II. The History of the Gentiles

God Created the Gentiles.

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Adam was a Gentile and the first Hebrew was Abram (Gen 14:13). The first 11 chapters of Genesis treat only the Gentiles. So, the first ~2,000 years of history was solely Gentile.

God revealed Himself to the Gentiles.

Genesis 2:16-17 "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

God taught Adam to speak giving him his first vocabulary (day, night, land, sea, etc...). God also gave Adam a command to take care of the Garden of Eden and not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God revealed the form and function of marriage between one man and one woman made out of man.

Gentiles Rebelled Against God. Because of this rebellion God cursed the Gentiles and Satan.

God Promised a Redeemer. God's grace revealed to the Gentiles that a Redeemer would come and crush Satan.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

Adam and Eve clearly believed God by naming their first son “Cain” which means “I have gotten a man: Jehovah”ⁱⁱ. Eve thought that her first born son was the God-man promised in Gen 3:15.

God Judged the non-Believing Gentiles. The Gentile Noah was given 120 years to preach grace and warn the world of the Flood judgment which was coming upon the whole earth.

Genesis 6:17 "Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.

God Saved the Believing Gentiles. Because of the hardness of their hearts only 8 people responded to God’s grace and walked into the Ark at the appointed time.

God Covenanted with the Gentiles. God came into an everlasting covenant with all the peoples of the earth even all flesh.

Genesis 9:16 "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

This covenant is often called the Noahic Covenant.

God Judged the Gentiles. God had commanded the Gentiles to scatter and populate the earth after the Flood (Gen 9:1) but they refused to scatter and all came together to build a kingdom of man that would exalt itself against the kingdom of God (Gen 11:4). As a result this angered God and once again, He judged them at the tower of Babel. This forced them to scatter because God introduced new languages. Since the Gentiles could no longer communicate with one another it was useless to try to work together. Thus, they scattered, every man with others who spoke the same language.ⁱⁱⁱ

God called the Gentile Abram out of his culture in Ur of the Chaldees and made covenantal promises with him. Abram was a descendant of Eber and therefore a Hebrew. At this time God began to divide the human race into two divisions. All who believe in Christ are the spiritual seed of Abraham because justification is always by faith. However, only those who are the natural seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the physical seed that constitute the nation of Israel. In the covenant God made with

Abraham in Gen 12 many promises are made. Some are personal, some are national, and some are universal. As such *God Included Gentiles in Abraham's Covenant*.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

The Gentiles enter into this covenant only in verse 3 and in terms of her treatment of Israel. If the Gentiles bless Israel she will be blessed. If the Gentiles curse Israel they will be cursed. Also, "all the families of the earth will be blessed" by the nation of Israel. This clearly refers to the blessing that comes through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and centers in Jesus Christ because Jesus is a Jew (John 4:9). Therefore we ought to never forget that salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22). From Gen 12 forward in Scripture, the only dealings of God with the Gentiles that are recorded are when they come into contact with the nation of Israel.

Egypt. In 1845BC Jacob and his family of 70 entered Egypt because of famine and 400 years later they came out a nation of ~ 2,000,000. This event is foundational to the nation of Israel and is a picture of "Redemption".

Assyria. In 722BC the northern Kingdom of Israel went into captivity. God had prophesied that if Israel did not follow His Law they would undergo military defeat and in fulfillment of God's prophecy the Assyrians did just that.

Babylon. In 586BC the southern Kingdom of Judah went into captivity. God had prophesied that if Israel did not follow His Law they would undergo military defeat and in fulfillment of God's prophecy the Babylonians did just that.

III. The Times of the Gentiles

The Babylonian captivity issued in what is known as "the times of the Gentiles". During this period of time the Gentile nations will dominate Israel. The phrase is used by Luke in his gospel.

Luke 21:24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Technically, “the times of the Gentiles began the Shechinah Glory departed from Solomon’s Temple in 586BC (Ezek 9:3ff). They will end when the Shechinah Glory returns to indwell the Millennial Temple (Ezek 43:4; 44:4).

TIMES OF THE GENTILES

**Shechinah Glory
Departs**

**Shechinah Glory
Returns**



During “the times of the Gentiles” Jerusalem will be under Gentile control. “While for brief periods of time Gentile control of Jerusalem has been relinquished, no final deliverance of Jerusalem from the power of the Gentiles will be fulfilled until the second coming of Christ.”^{iv}

Daniel received prophecy regarding both the program of God for Israel and the program of God for the Gentiles. The section of Dan 2:4-7:28 describes “the times of the Gentiles” (and is written in Aramaic, the common language among the Gentiles of that day). Beginning in Dan 2 Daniel is given both the dream and interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar. In this dream Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue with a head of gold which stood for “Babylon”; chest and arms of silver which stood for “Medo-Persia”; belly and thighs of bronze which stood for “Greece”; legs of Iron which stood for “Rome” and feet partly of iron and partly of clay which stood for “Rome Revived”. Daniel 7 records a similar prophecy of these four Gentile kingdoms but pictures them as four beasts. The first four stages of these kingdoms are already fulfilled prophecy. Jesus Christ was born during “the times of the Gentiles” under the Roman Empire. We might comment that two Gentile women were in the Messianic line (Matt 1:5, Rahab and Ruth). Gentiles were involved in the crucifixion. Gentiles were present at the resurrection (Roman guards). The only remaining kingdom prophesied in Daniel is the “Revived Roman Empire”. This stage is symbolized by the “ten toe” stage in Dan 2 and by the “ten-horned” beast of

Daniel 7. This final stage is on the horizon of world history. It will ultimately be ruled by the Antichrist who will be destroyed by the Son of Man coming from heaven as portrayed in Dan 7 or by the “smiting stone” of Dan 2. At that time “the times of the Gentiles” will be replaced by “the time of the King”.

During the present stage of “the times of the Gentiles” God is dealing with the Church; Jews and Gentiles called out by the gospel who through faith are baptized into Christ’s body. Specific NT prophecies concerning the Church, which is neither Jew nor Gentile, teach that we will be raptured to heaven before the Tribulation. During the Tribulation there will only be two divisions of humanity on earth; Gentiles and Jews. Then will come “the time of the end” (Dan 11:35; Matt 24:3ff). Those who survive the Tribulation and are believers will enter the Millennial Kingdom in their present bodies to re-populate the earth. Gentiles who live in the kingdom under the King’s rule will be blessed by God tremendously (as will be demonstrated in later chapters).

Present world conditions show that God is setting the stage for the unfolding of these global events. The most significant stage-setting event is the return of Jews in unbelief to her land and the establishment of an Israeli state on May 14, 1948.

IV. Conclusion

Today we have introduced the three divisions of humanity; Gentiles, Jews, and the Church of God. While God has one over-arching plan that includes all three peoples, He nevertheless has a distinctive purpose for each division of humanity. This also goes for the angels who play a role in all three divisions of humanity.

Today we wanted to look specifically at God’s purposes for the Gentile branch of humanity. History began with Gentiles who all spoke the same language and God gave them the promise of a Redeemer, God judged them in the Flood, God covenanted with them in the Noachic Covenant, and God once again judged them at the Tower of Babel. Then God began to create a division in humanity by calling out Abraham and making a covenant with him, his descendants, and the Gentiles through them. Gentiles are blessed or cursed depending on whether they bless or curse Israel and it is through Israel that all the families of the earth are blessed because the Savior came through Israel.

After Abraham little is said about the Gentiles unless they come into contact with Israel. The first major Gentile nation to come into contact with Israel was Egypt. It was in Egypt

that 70 people grew into a nation of ~2,000,000 over the period of 400 years. God showed His power in judging this oppressive Gentile nation.

The next major Gentile nation to come into contact with Israel was Assyria. In fulfillment of prophecy the northern kingdom of Israel was defeated and went into captivity in 722BC. A similar thing happened to the southern kingdom of Judah about 150 years later when they were defeated by Babylon in 586BC. At that time the Shechinah Glory departed from the Solomonic Temple and “the times of the Gentiles” began.

Daniel speaks of “the times of the Gentiles” and outlines their future in four kingdoms; Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Christ was born under the Roman Empire. Two Gentile were in the line of the Messiah. Gentiles were involved in the crucifixion. Gentiles were present at the resurrection (Roman guards). Rome will eventually be revived under the future Antichrist and then the Son of Man will come and set up God’s kingdom on earth. So, “the times of the Gentiles” began with the departure of the Shechinah Glory from the Temple in 586BC (Ezek 9:3ff) and will end when the Shechinah Glory returns and enters the Millennial Temple (Ezek 43:4, 44:4)

ⁱ For a chart relating the Jews, Gentiles, and the Church see Clarence Larkin, *The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth in the World*, 19 ½.

ⁱⁱ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Talk about insta-vocabulary. This must have been a tremendous event.

^{iv} Chafer & Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes*, 299.

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