

ALL THINGS IN CHRIST

In all wisdom and prudence making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him the plan for the fullness of the times

**TO HEAD UP THE ALL THINGS IN THE CHRIST,
the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in Him...**

(Ephesians 1:8b-10)

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Article #44

Fullness of the Nations [Ethnos]

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For those who study the Bible, it is apparent that translators of Scripture often inject their own bias into the text by using certain words over other ones. This is called **interpretative bias**.

Since all translations are the work of men, none are perfect and interpretative bias is inherent in practically all; however, some have less bias than others.

Bias is most readily seen in the way certain Hebrew or Greek words are translated. A case in point is the way the Hebrew word *olam* and the Greek words *aion* and *aionian* are translated to convey the thought of *forever* and *eternal* when they more accurately speak of *ages* or *eons* and *eonian*, as in *age-during*.

Goy and Ethnos

The Hebrew word *goy* and the Greek word *ethnos* fall into the same category as *olam* and *aion*. The proper translation of the words *goy* and *ethnos* is the word *nation*; however, at times, they are translated using the words *Gentile* or *heathen*, which injects the concept of a people that are not Jewish or not of the nation of Israel.

Unfortunately, the word *Gentile* injects interpretative bias; a bias that can be seen in the way *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* defines these two words.

Goy is "a foreign *nation*; hence a *Gentile*; also (figuratively) a *troop* of animals, or a *flight* of locusts: - Gentile, heathen, nation, people."

Ethnos is "a *race* (as of the same *habit*), that is, a *tribe*; specifically a *foreign* (*non-Jewish*) one (usually by implication *pagan*): - Gentile, heathen, nation, people."

Notice how *Strong's* relates these words to a foreign or non-Jewish tribe. But this raises a very important question: Is not Israel also a nation of tribes, an *ethnos*? The answer is yes, it most certainly is. In the original languages, Israel is referred to as a *goy* and an *ethnos*.

The first mention of the word *goy* or *nation* is found in the book of beginnings.

(5) The coasts of the nations [goy] were divided by these in their lands each by his tongue, by their families, in their nations [goy]. ... (31) These were the sons of Shem, according to their

families, according to their tongues, in their lands, according to their nations [*goy*]. (Genesis 10:5, 31 LITV)

Genesis 10 recounts the generations of the sons of Noah, and all of them are referred to as being divided into their nations. However, the *King James Version* (KJV) uses the word *Gentiles* instead of *nations*, but how could it be stated, using Strong's definition, that Noah's descendants were foreign non-Jewish nations when they actually represented the totality of all nations in that day? To add to the confusion, the KJV uses the words *Gentiles* and *nations* for the word *goy* in the same sentence: **By these were the isles of the Gentiles** [*goy*] **divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations** [*goy*] (Genesis 10:5 KJV).

One could argue that the Jews came from the line of Shem and therefore should be referred to as nations and not Gentiles. But the KJV adds further confusion by referring to the sons of Japheth as Gentiles and the sons of Ham as nations. This makes no sense. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the use of the word *Gentile* is obviously interpretative bias to establish that all that have descended from the line of Japheth are foreign non-Jews. Are we to assume that those of the line of Ham are Jews? Strange!

Turning to Abraham, we discover the use of the word *goy* in Hebrew and *ethnos* in Greek.

Hebrew words of the Old Testament often define Greek words of the New Testament, and the word *goy* is a good example of a word that does just that, for it defines the Greek word *ethnos*, as noted below. But notice how the KJV injects its bias by using the words *heathen* and *Gentile*.

(12:2) And I will make you a great nation [*goy*], **and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing...** **(18:18) And Abraham shall become a great and powerful nation** [*goy*], **and all the nations** [*goy*] **of the earth shall be blessed in him?** (Genesis 12:2; 18:18 NASB)

And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the nations [*ethnos-goy*] [KJV = heathen] **by faith, preached the gospel before to Abraham: "All the nations** [*ethnos-goy*] [KJV = nations] **will be blessed in you."** Gen. 12:3 (Galatians 3:8 LITV)

That the blessing of Abraham might be to the nations [*ethnos-goy*] [KJV = Gentiles] **in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.** (Galatians 3:14 LITV)

All the nations will be blessed in Abraham, whether one labels them Jewish or non-Jewish, heathen or Gentile. It matters not what label or descriptor one places on a community of people united under one government; they are all nations destined to be justified by God through the same faith exhibited by Abraham. The blessing of Abraham is for all nations.

Consequently, defining one nation as *Gentile* or *heathen* and another as *Jewish* is not necessary when translating the words *goy* and *ethnos*. By studying the context around the use of these words, one can discern if they are, in fact, referring to the ancient nation of Israel or not.

Besides, Israel is referred to as a nation (*goy, ethnos*) just like all the other nations of the world, both past and present.

In His displeasure over the rebellion of the sons of Israel, the Lord told Moses that He would destroy them and make Moses into a great nation [*goy*].

"I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation [*goy*] greater and mightier than they." (Numbers 14:12 NASB)

As Jesus walked among the Judahites, the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council and questioned what to do with Jesus. They feared that if Jesus established the kingdom in their day, they would lose their place of honor and control over the people.

"If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation [*ethnos*]." (John 11:48 NASB)

In other words, the Judahites of that day saw themselves as a nation, an *ethnos*.

With these few verses, it is apparent that translators do a disservice by injecting their bias into words. As presented, it is best to translate the words *goy* and *ethnos* as *nation(s)* and allow the reader to decide what nation(s) is in view based on the context.

Romans 11 and Israel

Now, let us consider Romans 11 and Paul's use of the word *ethnos*, used 5 times (Romans 11:11, 12, 13 [twice], 25). Immediately, there is a challenge because many translations use the word *Gentiles* instead of nations, so that when we come to verse 25, we are led to believe that the fullness of the nations (*Gentiles*) refers to non-Jewish or heathen nations.

(25) For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, of this secret—that ye may not be wise in your own conceits—that hardness in part to Israel hath happened till the fulness of the nations [*ethnos*] may come in; (26) and so all Israel shall be saved, according as it hath been written, 'There shall come forth out of Zion [Zion] he who is delivering, and he shall turn away impiety from Jacob, (27) and this to them is the covenant from Me, when I may take away their sins.' (Romans 11:25-27 YLT)

Before attempting to explain what Paul meant by the phrase *the fullness of the nations*, there are a few points to be made.

First, a search of 25 different translations revealed that, in verse 25, the word *ethnos* has been translated *Gentiles* in 19 translations, *God's non-Jewish people* in 1 translation, and *nations* in 5 translations. Clearly, a majority believe that the phrase *the fullness of the Gentiles* is preferred over *the fullness of the nations*.

In other words, the majority of translators believe that Paul referred to a period of time in which the gentile nations, not the Israelite nation, will be saved. But, does this make *the*

fullness of the Gentiles the more biblically sound rendering, or does its use indicate interpretative bias on a grand scale? Perhaps, it is the latter.

Keep in mind that, according to Scripture, gentiles, heathens, Jews, or any other grouping of people can be nations based on the words *goy* and *ethnos*. The context surrounding the word determines the identity of the people. Or simply, context determines identity.

Second, we need to throw off the tradition of men that sees the word *Israel* through the lens of a single Jewish nation, most notably the ancient one that was located in Canaan/Judea and the one now sitting in the Middle East that is presumed to be made up of blood descendants of Jacob and his son Judah but, in fact, is a mixed gene pool of Jews, Gentiles, Ishmaelites, and Edomites.

The name *Israel* was given to Jacob not when he was born but later in life when he came to see that God rules. The name *Israel*, meaning "God rules," was given to Jacob, meaning supplanter, after he wrestled with the Lord all night. Thus, *Israel* is not a name given based on a certain bloodline but on a certain character or, more specifically, a yielding to the will and sovereignty of God. Jacob was a man ruled by his will and strength, but Israel was a broken man ruled by the will of God who leaned on God for strength. This is seen in Jacob-Israel's hip being dislocated so that he had a limp.

Third, the revived, present-day nation called *Israel* is in the exact same condition that the ancient, historical one was in; both are disqualified from inheriting the Kingdom (e.g., Matthew 8:10-12; 12:31-32; 21:33-42; 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24). The present Israel has failed to bear the fruit of the Kingdom of God even though its leaves have come forth once again (Matthew 21:19, 43; 24:32).

Many assume that the rebirth of a modern-day nation called *Israel* is to fulfill prophecy that it will be the head of the nations in the coming Kingdom of Christ. It is true that its rebirth is to fulfill prophecy, but not in this regard. It is to fulfill prophecy relating to **the controversy of Zion**, which speaks to the conflict between Jacob and Esau [Idumea, Edom] and Edom's desire to rebuild the desolate places (Isaiah 34:4-8; Malachi 1:1-4). The Lord has allowed Edom to rebuild (i.e., present-day Israel), but He will throw it down once again (Malachi 1:4; also see Psalm 78:60-61; Isaiah 29:1-6; Jeremiah 19:10-12; 7:12).

Israel, as the world presently knows it, had to come forth so that it could be judged in fulfillment of the Lord's promise to judge Jerusalem, which is aligned with mystery Babylon that will fall in an hour (Revelation 18), **the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified** (Revelation 11:8).

At best, this Israel is of the Old Covenant based on the natural seed of Jacob, the circumcision of the flesh, and the letter of the law written on stone. At worst, some segments of the Israelite population are as secular as the rest of the world. Today, most who call themselves Jews continue in unbelief and reject the same Messiah that the ancient Jews rejected and killed over 2,000 years ago.

Fourth, God's true Israel is a nation based on the New Covenant, which is based on the seed of God planted within the spirit of a new race, the circumcision of the heart, and the spirit of the law put into minds and written on hearts (Hebrews 8:7-13). A new nation came forth after the cross that bears the fruit of the Kingdom, and this nation that has come forth from among the nations is *spiritual* Israel, the dwelling of God in spirit (Ephesians 2:22), that will be made up of many sons brought unto glory (Hebrews 2:10).

Fifth, we need to understand that the name *Israel* refers primarily to *birthright* and *sonship*, not to rulership. Rulership came through the line of Judah (Genesis 49:10) and sonship (birthright) comes through the line of Israel; more specifically, through the line of Joseph (Genesis 48:15-16; 49:22).

Sixth, Solomon ruled over the kingdom of Israel, but after his death, it was divided into two tribes in the south (Judah and Benjamin) called ***the house of Judah***, and the remaining ten tribes in the north called ***the house of Israel***. The line of the king went with Judah. This is why Jesus had to be from the tribe of Judah. At the cross, He took the scepter of Judah. All who believe on Jesus unite themselves with Judah and its King, Jesus. However, entering the Kingdom is a matter of birthright and being placed as a son who receives the inheritance of the Father's Kingdom (Matthew 13:38; 43). The line of the son went with the line of Joseph and his sons, which is associated with the house of Israel.

Seventh, following the division of Solomon's kingdom, the two houses were taken into captivity. Judah eventually returned to Jerusalem and remained under foreign control; however, Israel was scattered among the nations and became known as ***the lost sheep of the house of Israel***. They lost their national identity and, as such, were lost among the nations of the world. Judah and Israel are reunited only in Christ.

Interestingly, when the King comes a second time, He comes with the name of Shiloh, not the name of Judah.

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." (Genesis 49:10 NASB)

(1) Then the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there; and the land was subdued before them. ... (10) And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the land to the sons of Israel according to their divisions. (Joshua 18:1, 10 NASB)

The name *Shiloh* is significant, for it was the place that Joshua assembled the sons of Israel as the land was subdued before them and as he divided it among the tribes as their inheritance in the kingdom-nation. In type, this speaks of Jesus-Joshua delivering His people, His Body, into their new land of immortal bodies, which is their inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

We need to be clear that the present-day state of Israel is not the lost house of Israel. The Zionists that founded this state usurped the name *Israel* (and *Zion*) as if they were a reunited

kingdom of the two houses. They are not. If they had taken the name *Judah*, at least they would have been closer to the truth, although *Edom* might be the most accurate name.

These points are important in understanding Paul's use of the word *ethnos* in Romans 11, so let us return to verse 25.

(25) For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, of this secret—that ye may not be wise in your own conceits—that hardness in part to Israel hath happened till the fulness of the nations [*ethnos*] may come in; (26) and so all Israel shall be saved, according as it hath been written, 'There shall come forth out of Sion [Zion] he who is delivering, and he shall turn away impiety from Jacob, (27) and this to them is the covenant from Me, when I may take away their sins.' (Romans 11:25-27 YLT)

As stated previously, in Romans 11, Paul referred to the *ethnos* (nations) 5 times, but this raises a question: What did Paul mean by the phrase *the fullness of the nations*? Was he referring to non-Jewish nations, that is, Gentiles, as so many translations imply? No; Paul was actually referring to the nation of Israel, the house of Israel that was dispersed among the nations and gradually became known by other national or ethnic names.

Paul's words could be rephrased as ***the fullness of the Israelite nations***.

Again, we need to throw off the tradition of men that sees the word *Israel* through the lens of a single Jewish nation, most notably the ancient one that was located in Canaan and the one now sitting in the Middle East that is presumed to be made up of blood descendants of Jacob and his son Judah, as well as Ishmael and Esau.

When he learned that Jacob was sick, Joseph went to see his father, along with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob blessed his son with fruitfulness and took Manasseh and Ephraim to be his own as Reuben and Simeon were his own. As Israel, Jacob called for the two sons so that he could bless them.

"The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and may my name [Israel] live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." (Genesis 48:16 NASB)

However, although Manasseh was the firstborn, Israel placed Ephraim before his brother so that he would be greater than his older brother. In other words, the birthright was given to Ephraim.

(17) When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. (18) Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head." (19) But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations." (20) He blessed them that

day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh. (Genesis 48:17-20 NASB)

Notice that Ephraim was blessed to become a multitude of nations, not one nation, and that he was blessed, along with his brother, to possess the name *Israel*. Thus the stage was set for not simply one nation called *Israel* but for many nations that are *Israel*. *Israel* is a multitude of nations, and it is in this context that Paul referred to the fullness of the nations.

But how did Ephraim become a multitude of nations known as *Israel*? It started when the Lord scattered the house of Israel. It needs to be added that, according to the prophets, Ephraim and Israel are synonymous.

Through Hosea the prophet, the Lord spoke against the house of Israel as He commanded Hosea to take a wife of harlotry who gave birth to a son.

And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God." (Hosea 1:9 NASB)

In the days of Moses, the Lord told His people that, if they rebelled against His commands or were unfaithful to Him, He would scatter them among the nations (Leviticus 26:33; Nehemiah 1:8), a warning that He repeated many times. Israel became a harlot and was cast out of the land and scattered among the nations, just as the Lord had promised. Although this might seem to be a great tragedy, it actually was part of the plan of God to bring forth a multitude of nations.

(10) Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and in the place where it is said to them, "You are not My people," it will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God." (11) And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader, and they will go up from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel. (Hosea 1:10-11 NASB)

Verse 10 explains it very clearly; Israel was to be scattered into the nations with no name that identified them as belonging to the Lord. In other words, "You are not My people." However, it is in this place, that is, among the nations, that it will be said of them "You are the sons of the living God." It is here that both the house of Judah and the house of Israel are reunited after being separated since the division of Solomon's kingdom. Again, they are reunited in one leader, God's King.

The Lord, as the Sower of seed who seeks for a great harvest, scattered Israel throughout the earth.

And I will sow her to Me in the earth. And I will have mercy on No Mercy. And I will say to Not My People, You are My people! And they shall say, My God! (Hosea 2:23 LITV)

The same picture is given of this sowing in the parable of the Sower in which Jesus sows the good seed in the field, which is the world, in order to reap a great harvest of sons of the

Kingdom (Matthew 13:18-23; 37-43). Thus, the sowing is to produce sons, which is what Ephraim signifies.

When His disciples questioned why He spoke in parables regarding the mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens, Jesus responded by quoting Isaiah 6:9-10 and stating it was being fulfilled. The people were blind, deaf, and dull (Matthew 13:10-17). Paul picked up this theme in Romans 11:25 by declaring that a partial hardening has happened to Israel. They were blind to the truth. But why? It was so the scattering would continue until the appointed time set by the Father, which is when the promise to Ephraim is completed. The sons of Israel had to become as the sand of the sea. By the way, the sea is often used as a reference to the nations.

Down through the millennia, the house of Israel that was scattered in the earth has become many nations. Undoubtedly, countless descendants of Israel helped to form many of the nations on earth today, especially those that sprung up in Europe and in other lands, such as North America, Australia and South Africa. Of course, only God knows how the sowing has progressed, so this is not an exclusive list. But the point is that the fullness of the nations refers to the nations (plural) of Israel coming forth out of the earth, which, in turn, means that these nations must be brought into the Stone Kingdom with Jesus as King, until the Kingdom fills the whole earth (Daniel 2:35).

However, keep in mind that becoming an Israelite, on an individual level, is not a matter of bloodline but of a changed heart, one that believes on Jesus and declares Him to be Lord and King. **It is not about a gene pool; it is about a heart pool.** On the national level, a nation becomes one of the nations of Israel by declaring Jesus is King over the nation. Based on its founding, the United States had great potential of this happening, but like all that have gone before, we too have failed. Why? So that **He may show mercy to all** (Romans 11:32)!

Only when all the nations have come into the Kingdom of Christ to become Israelite nations will Paul's prophetic word be fulfilled: **So all Israel will be saved.** Thus, the fullness of the nations refers to the full complement of the nations coming under the Kingship of Jesus. This is the true Israel on a national level; the nations that declare God rules and willingly submit to His righteous rule.

Abrahamic Covenant

Actually, the fullness of the nations starts with the promise God made to Abraham the father of many nations, which is also called the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul reminds us of this promise.

For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (17) (as it is written, A father of many nations have I made thee) before him whom he believed, even God, who giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were. (18) Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be. (Romans 4:16-18 ASV)

It is true that Abraham brought forth many nations through his physical seed; consequently, he has many descendants, perhaps, even countless numbers in our day. Only God knows who they are. However, Paul knew that the many nations were based on faith, not on bloodline.

Paul defines the seed of Abraham not only as the physical seed but the spiritual seed of God that comes from faith. In fact, even those who might have a claim on being a descendant of Abraham must have faith to be a fulfillment of the promise of many nations in fulfillment of the fullness of the nations.

Abraham is the father of us all who have the same faith that he exercised, and all who have this faith are of the seed of Abraham, the seed of faith, and are included in the many nations.

John concurred with Paul and called it the seed of God.

Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. (1 John 3:9 ASV)

Paul received his understanding of the faith of Abraham through the book of beginnings.

And I will make you a great nation [*goy*], and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing.... (Genesis 12:2 NASB)

And Abraham shall become a great and powerful nation [*goy*], and all the nations [*goy*] of the earth shall be blessed in him. (Genesis 18:18 NASB)

Notice that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him, which means that, ultimately, no nation will be left out. Why? Because eventually, all the nations will have the faith of Abraham, the faith he had before he was circumcised. Again, Paul reiterates this great truth.

And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the nations [*goy*] by faith, preached the gospel before to Abraham: "All the nations [*goy*] will be blessed in you." Gen. 12:3 (Galatians 3:8 LITV)

That the blessing of Abraham might be to the nations [*goy*] in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:14 LITV)

How will the nations be blessed? God will justify the nations by faith. How will the nations be blessed in Abraham? They will be blessed through justification by faith, which is in Christ Jesus. In other words, to fulfill the promise to Abraham, the nations must be justified, and for this to happen, they must be brought to faith in Christ. The blessing comes through Jesus and this requires faith in Jesus.

All the nations will be blessed in Abraham, whether one labels them Jewish or non-Jewish, heathen or Gentile. It matters not what label or descriptor one places on a community of people united under God's Kingdom; they all are nations destined to be justified by God

through the same faith exhibited by Abraham. The blessing of Abraham is for all nations, and when all nations are brought to this point, it can be said that all Israel will be saved.

Jacob was a supplanter, a man of the flesh, and this could be said of all mankind and of all nations. After all, the nation that came from the loins of Jacob turned into a rebellious nation, a people of the flesh.

A day is coming when God will take away the sin of all the nations, because **God was in Christ *conciliating the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them*** (2 Corinthians 5:19), and **through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven** (Colossians 1:20).

The death and resurrection of the Son of God is an absolute, 100% success in reconciling all mankind and all nations to God, not all at the same time, but all eventually.

Consider how Paul concludes Romans 11.

(32) For God shut up all into disobedience, that He may show mercy to all. (33) O the depth of the riches and of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (34) "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who became His counselor?" Isa. 40:13 (35) "Or who first gave to Him, and it will be repaid to him?" Job 41:11 (36) Because of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:32-36 LITV)

Paul was caught up in the unsearchable riches of Christ. He saw that all have been shut up in disobedience so that, at ***the consummation of the ages***, no one and no nation will be able to take any credit for entering the Kingdom of God and being grafted into the glorious olive tree and partaking of its rich root (Romans 11:17). It all will be of God and His Son.

Let us be encouraged, even rejoice, that all the nations, meaning all mankind, will be saved. All the nations shall be blessed in Abraham because all the nations will eventually have the faith of Abraham, even if they must go through the discipline of the lake of fire. In the eyes of God, this will be the true Israel that has always been in His heart and mind.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. It all comes from Him and goes to Him in glory. **To Him be the glory!**