

THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES

By

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Rom 11:12

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

Rom 11:25

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

INTRODUCTION

We begin with a definition significant terms to be used throughout this discussion which are found in text, context or elsewhere in Scripture.

ISRAEL

The first term which one must define in chapters 9,10 and 11 of Romans is *Israel*. No discussion of this portion of the epistle can hope to meet with success without a careful understanding of what the writer meant by this term. By *Israel* we understand Paul to mean the nation of Israel. This is just to say the term means the people of the nation as a nation. Bruce hones this idea:

It is impossible to entertain an exegesis which understands 'Israel' here [11:26] in a different sense from 'Israel' in verse 25 ('a hardening has come upon a part of Israel'). The connecting words 'and so' (cf. 5:12) say more than 'and then'; they imply that 'in this way'--by the operation of the divine purpose that the gospel should be received by the Gentile first, and then also by the Jew—the salvation of 'all Israel' will come about. [Bruce. *Romans*. 11:26. p. 209].

The question is frequently asked, Does not *Israel* mean rather than the nation, only the *elect* of that nation?

We have already said that there can be no question here of applying the term *Israel* to the *spiritual* Israel in the sense of Gal. 6:16. It is no less impossible to limit its application, with Bengel and Olshausen, to *the elect portion* of Israel, which would lead to a tautology with the verb *shall be saved*, and would suppose, besides, the resurrection of all the Israelites who had died before. And what would there be worthy of the term *mystery* (ver. 25) in the idea of the salvation of all the

elect Israelites! [Godet. *Romans* 11:26, p. 411; Cf. S. Lewis Johnson, *Paul and 'The Israel of God,'* PBJ. Oct.-Dec. 2009, p. 3].

Peters also discusses this idea:

Unless we accept the Divine Order laid down, it is impossible to explain the numerous prophecies which describe the Jewish nation, *as a nation*, to experience a blessedness unexampled here on earth. If we say, this has been fulfilled, then we *belittle* the Word of God, and challenge His foreknowledge; [we would rather say His predestination—JC]; if we divert these prophecies to a fulfillment in the Church, then we *violate* the plainest rules of language and make Scripture to utter and give hope which were never intended to be realized. [Peters. *Theo. Kingdom*. II, 77].

FULLNESS

The next term to be considered is *pleroma* and it is translated *fullness*. This word occurs frequently in Scripture [17 times] and the meaning is *fullness* or *abundance* in our text [Cf. Thayer]. I give a few examples . In Mk 8:19 when they took up these baskets, they were said to be *full* or *to be filled*. Who would think to say these baskets only contained a fourth of a basket? Half a basket? Three fourths of a basket? The meaning is obviously *full* baskets.

The term is used in Mk 2:21, for *filled it up*—that is a patch. Now who would take a mere scrap that could in no wise cover the torn place and think to patch garment with it? The idea is that the patch must exceed the torn place in every way. There must be a fullness or a surplus. So the *fullness* here means that it *fills up* the rent place.

When Paul spoke of going to Rome to preach to the disciples there, he said, And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the *fullness* of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Rom 15:29. This fullness of blessing is that which is referred to in Eph 1:3 and 3:19 and speaks of an abundance—for example, all that a vessel can hold. This cannot then be a smattering, a remnant, or a brand plucked out of the fire—but it means an abundance of whatever it is applied to. Delling in TDNT says:

1. “That which fills,”.... 2. a. In measurement, “full measure,” R. 11:25 numerically “the whole,” for *panta ta...*(cf. 1:5), with *pas Isarel*, v. 26 intentionally chosen as a fuller expression. [TDNT. 6. 302].

FULLNESS OF ISRAEL

The fullness of Israel is the direct opposite to their *casting away*, their *diminishing or decay* [margin], their being *broken off* the good olive tree (their own root), their blindness, trespass, their unbelief. This great apostasy continues until the time which Paul describes in Rom 11:26-29:

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

This is what Paul calls “their fullness” in the text. The nation will then be saved as a nation. Not every person in that nation, but the great mass of them.

FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES

We have also the *Fullness of the Gentiles* in text and context [Ro 11:12, 25]. What is the meaning of the *Fullness of the Gentiles*? The term *fullness of Gentiles* leads some to think that when this occurs, the Gentiles and Israel will merely change places. The Gentiles, they think, will then be cast away in the main and Israel will be restored in the main, a sort of divine do si do. But this idea does not follow from Scripture. Rather the restoration of Israel will bring about a fullness—a *pleroma* of the Gentiles. If the loss of Israel was the *riches* of the Gentiles, how much more their *fullness*. That is the fullness of Israel will add riches upon riches to the Gentiles in terms of the the gospel being effectual among them. This is that euphoria of which the OT prophets glowingly predict. The full glory of God reaching even the far flung regions of the earth—the Gentile domain!

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

This term is found in Lk 24:21 and is frequently confused with the fullness of the Gentiles. We believe the two terms are distinctly different. The *times of the Gentiles* refers to that period when they are dominant. Israel continued to exist after the *time of the Gentiles* began. Nor was Israel broken off until their rejection of Christ. Then was the Kingdom taken from them and given to a nation that would bring forth the fruit thereof, that is the Gentiles. [Mt 21:43; Cf. Lk 20:16]. But mark well that from that time until this day, the *fullness of the Gentiles* has not yet come in but the *times of the Gentiles* still roll on. The fullness of Gentiles is another aspect of the mystery and it will not take place until the Fullness of Israel comes in at the coming of the Lord! The times of the Gentiles began when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem. Israel again became a nation in 1948 but this did not bring about the end of Gentile times. The Times of the Gentiles will end only when Israel turns to the Lord in repentance and faith. Thus the *Times of the Gentiles* and the *Fullness of the Gentiles* are different and distinct things.

REMNANT

Having determined the meaning of *Israel* to be the *nation* of Israel, it follows that a *remnant* of Israel, is a part of the whole, “ There is a remnant according to the election of grace.” Ro 11:5. *Remnant* means “that which is left...i.e., there is a spiritual 'remnant' saved by the gospel from the midst of apostate Israel...the 'remnant' is small, and as such is an evidence of God's electing grace...” [Vine. 522]. We have an OT example of the meaning of the term in the account of Rehoboam and the two tribes left to him after the revolt of the ten northern tribes under Jeroboam, 1 Kings 12:23. “Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people...” The remnant to Paul means Israel was not totally rejected, but only in part, even though it was the greater part. This also indicates that this casting off is not permanent, for why preserve any, if by the casting away God meant to reprobate the nation?

MYSTERY

“Mystery in the NT is not the idea of something which cannot be understood but rather it is some Divine truth which once was hidden but is now revealed.” [ISBE. 2105]. Men would never be able to know the mystery unless the Lord had seen fit to reveal it. Thus Paul does not wish the Romans to be ignorant of this mystery of the blindness of Israel and the fullness of the Gentiles. Ro 11:25-29.

A WORD ON INTERPRETATION

The interpretation of Scripture as set forth by the Reformers has greatly colored all who came after them. We can scarcely realize the weight of a man like Calvin (and other reformers) on our method of Scripture interpretation. This influence is especially strong in eschatology because he took his ideas on this subject primarily from Roman Catholicism and these ideas consequently dominate biblical interpretation to this day. [Cf. Ramm. *Prot. Bib. Inter.*, 38-43]. Of course the Reformers were expressly biased against two things in particular in eschatology and these two things clouded their whole approach to this subject. These two things were: 1. The restoration of the Jews, and 2. The thousand year reign. Godet recognized their bias:

It is almost incredible how our Reformers could have held out obstinately, as they have done, against a thought [the restoration of the Jews—JC] so clearly expressed but they showed themselves in general rather indifferent about points of eschatology, and they dreaded in particular everything that appeared to favor the expectation of the thousand years' reign which had been so much abused in their time. [Godet. *Romans*. 11:25-26, p. 410].

It seems impossible that during the fullness of Israel and the fullness of the Gentiles we should find the bodies of the saints still under the power of death; the Colossus still erect on Israel's grave, Da 2; the apostasy of Israel still rampart; the knowledge of the Lord scarcely known among the Gentiles; the departed saints reigning with Christ, separate from their bodies and Christ supposedly sitting on David's throne! All those marvelous times, described by the Prophets in which they foresaw the restoration of Israel, the fullness of the Gentiles, Satan

bound, evil put down, Christ reigning in Jerusalem, the knowledge and glory of the Lord covering the earth, were meant only to teach us, so we are told, that we die and go to Heaven! This is what an *un-spiritual* interpretation has forced upon the Revelation of God! How could these things be ?

GREAT TRANSFORMATION OF ISRAEL

Salvation is of the Jews! These profound words of Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:22) are full of the Bread of Heaven. Nor can we understand them without going back to the very beginning. Salvation is of, or from, the Jews because it was Abraham that God called up out of Ur and He made a covenant with him and promised him untold and incalculable blessings which concerned not only salvation, but how this salvation was to be delivered and through what means. These marvelous blessings were not only to the Jews, but according to the inscrutable purposes of Jehovah, they were to be sent to the Gentiles who had nothing to do with that covenant. This included the rebellion of Israel and their crucifying their Messiah, the Lord of glory. Because of their hardness, blindness and perverseness, they were cast away as a nation. And what then? The gospel they rejected become the riches of the Gentiles, Ro 11:12, 15!

Thus we have *Israel* described as *enemies* in Ro 11:28—that is to the Gentiles. This term *enemies* cannot refer to the elect of Israel for they were anything but enemies of the Gentiles. It was in fact through their ministry that the Gentiles were given the gospel in the first place and it was by them that they were received into fellowship, Ac 11:18. Through the fall of the nation of Israel, salvation is come to the Gentiles, Ro 11:11. So the term *enemies* refers to those who fell, that is the majority of the nation of Israel. Those who fell are contrasted with the rest who did not fall. Both groups are of the nation of Israel. But those who received the gospel are defined as a remnant according to the election of grace, Ro 11:5, (Cf. 2 K 19:4 and 1 K 11:31).

Among the predicted blessings in this chapter is the restoration of Israel as a nation of believers in Jesus as the Messiah. Israel, now dwelling in darkness, turned away from God, a veil lingers over them, their branches broken off, and only a remnant abiding to confirm the fact that their stumbling and fall was not for their reprobation or annihilation but for the purpose of sending forth the gospel to the Gentiles. The kingdom was taken from Israel temporarily and given to a nation which would bring forth the proper fruit thereof. God is working out His will in and through these very things. This mystery of the unbelief of Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles is now revealed and we are to believe it and to be humbled by it. Ro 11:21,25.

As there is a *casting away* of Israel so there is a *receiving* of them (Ro 11:12, 15, 26). As there is a blindness, a stupor, a falling, a death, an en-robing in sin so there is also a casting away of the vile garments a healing of their blindness, an awakening from their dullness and a removal of their sins, a restoration of life! And so all Israel shall be saved, [Ro 11:26]. This is the fullness of Israel and it is necessary in the purpose of the Lord before the fullness of the Gentiles can come in.

By the fall of Israel, salvation is sent to the Gentiles. Of course one cannot make Israel here to be anything but Israel because this Israel is contrasted with the Gentiles. There can be no reasonable denial that there are here two distinct entities—Israel and the Gentiles referred to by Paul. This fall of Israel and this turning to the Gentiles has for its purpose primarily to provoke the Jews to jealousy. The implication is that as the fall of Israel produced a marvelous blessing for the Gentiles, the fullness of Israel will bring an even greater blessings to the Gentiles! So what will happen to the Gentiles when the fullness of Israel comes in? The restoration of Israel in a national sense will bring about the Fullness of the Gentiles.

Haman, Hitler and numbers of other tyrants have attempted to eliminate the Jews. Some theologians have tried to do the same thing in a different way. (Cf. *Future Israel* by Horner). But all of these men are under the control of God. Israel could not fall or fail before Christ came, nor can it cease to exist since Christ came simply because Israel is tied to the purpose of God. Nor is it possible for the restoration of Israel to fail. Israel's restoration is not a possibility, it is an absolute necessity because the Word of God speaks of the *Fullness* of Israel and there can be no fullness of a thing without the existence of it. God works all things after the counsel of His own will. In His Word we are taught to pray, "Thy kingdom come." what did Christ mean by this phrase? Certainly not that His everlasting kingdom should come—for that kingdom was in existence since the foundation of the world! But this refers to that Kingdom which was future to the disciples, who were taught to pray for its coming. It is still future to us for this prayer is yet being offered up by all His servants on earth. And that Kingdom will come. When we pray, 'Thy Kingdom come,' as McClain puts it, "our true meaning is, Come Lord Jesus." [McClain. *Greatness of the Kingdom*. 35]. All of these great promises are tied essentially to the coming of Christ! The Fullness of Israel waits for Christ to return!

THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE JEWISH NATION

The present condition of Israel is described by Paul in various terms. They are in unbelief! This is not merely the idea of a nation which has never received the gospel, for in that case, the world is full of such. But this unbelief, is that which indicates that Israel had all the bounties given to them but in vain. It is described in these mournful terms:

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Rom 9:1-5

They are then described in chapter eleven as having the spirit of slumber, with eyes which do not see and ears which do not hear unto this day, v. 8. They rejected the gospel and through their trespass salvation is come to the Gentiles. Now to identify Israel, one need only ask to whom did these circumstances belong?

Was it to the believing remnant? Certainly not!

Was it to the mass of humanity? In no way!

Well, to whom then?

The answer is that it was to Israel as the nation chosen of God who were the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. This included both the elect and non-elect; the believing and the unbelieving. This definition is the only consistent meaning which can be assigned to the term Israel in Ro 9,10, 11. This is the definition which always distinguishes Gentiles from Israel. If one accepts the idea that *Israel* means the *elect remnant*, he is immediately confronted with such an unwelcome statement as “that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in,” where such an idea is impossible.

But Israel is neither reprobated nor annihilated, Le 26:44, 45; De 4:31. Israel is destined to have what is here called a *fullness*, a *pleroma*. This is something that will exceed all that has gone before.

FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES NOT THE END OF THE GENTILES

In using this term *fullness of the Gentiles*, Ro 11:25, Paul does not speak of the *end* of the Gentiles or the cutting off of the nations! Just as he did not speak of the end of Israel when they were cast away. But here there is a difference between Israel and the Gentiles. The fullness of the Gentiles speaks of a plethora—an abundance. We are not here to think of the end of the blessings, but of a superabundance, an overflowing—a marvelous expansion which we believe will exceed any thing ever witnessed before!

CALLING OF THE GENTILES NOT THEIR FULLNESS

The Gentiles were called when Peter was sent with the keys to open the door of the gospel to them in Acts 10. But we must not think that this *calling* of the Gentiles was the *fullness* of the Gentiles because that calling was a historical event when Paul wrote, but the fullness of the Gentiles was yet future when he wrote, Ro 11:25. The calling of the Gentiles was an open door (1 Cor 16:9 with 2 Cor 2:12) to them. Christ specifically said that He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel during His personal ministry, Matt 15:24. And when He sent out the twelve to preach He forbid them to go to Samaritans or Gentiles, Mt 10:5-6. But in the “depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Ro 11:33) He opened the door to the Gentiles and broke down the middle wall of partition, Ep 2:14-17.

Another reason the calling of the Gentiles could not refer to their fullness is that this great time waits for the fullness of Israel, Ro 11:12, 15, 25. As the breaking off of Israel and grafting in of the Gentiles was purposed and fulfilled by the Lord, Jn 10:16; Ac 10:15, we can rest assured that He will also bring about the fullness of the Gentiles at the appropriate time, Ro 11:25.

This idea is borne out when we read *Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?* What we are given here is that the fall of the Jews introduced great riches to the Gentiles. This is a fact. We see how Israel's rejection of Christ and the gospel constituted their fall. Yet, the Lord did not leave himself without a people in the world, but rather this fall of the Jews produced the riches of the Gentiles through His grace.

The gospel was welcomed by the Gentiles when it was declined by the Jews, Act 13:48. The more the Jews were hardened, the more they blasphemed and the more they blasphemed, the more the Gentiles were enriched! This was so bountiful that the pagan temples were deserted to the point the pagans sought and obtained government support to suppress Christianity!

The gospel ran into all the known world like electricity and churches sprang up throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Now if this was the riches of the Gentiles resulting from the Jew's "diminishing," or "decay" (margin), or "slipping away," (Green) and it was, then Paul asks, how much more their fullness? That is, if what we know took place under the casting away of Israel was to the advantage of the Gentiles, what will it be when Israel is restored to their fullness? This will result in the fullness of the Gentiles as well, Ro 11:25. This is a great promise that when Israel receives its fullness, the corresponding fullness of the Gentiles will be proportionately greater!

This means that Israel will be restored to a place of fullness and this may be only understood in the light of Israel's being cast away. We mean that Israel fell by unbelief. This was not by accident or chance. Rather it was done at the direction of the Lord because it was written in the prophets. Nor was this unbelief for the destruction or reprobation of Israel. It was not to evacuate the world of the gospel. Far from it. It was through this fall or stumbling of Israel, that the greatest riches the world ever saw should come to the Gentiles! Everything the gospel has ever done in the history of the world, every nation that has had any knowledge of Jesus Christ in any age received it because these riches accrued to them through the fall of Israel.

STATUS OF THE GENTILES AT THIS PRESENT TIME

This present time is still the *time of the Gentiles*, Lk 21:24, but it is in no sense the *fullness* of the Gentiles. Instead of there being a fullness of the Gentiles, we see the exact opposite. The Gentile nations are benighted. Though Gentiles were called by the gospel near two thousand years ago, yet the world today is not under gospel influence. Far from it. The number of gospel churches in the world is comparatively small. Much of what is termed "Christian" will not bear the test of Scripture. The world is dominated by false religions, false Christs, false 'Christian' systems and this apostasy is deepening in every way. This is not that fullness of the Gentiles of which Paul

was speaking. Are we to take the present “Christian” scene and elevate it to the place of a great plethora of gospel effectiveness? West describes the world as he saw it in the late 1800s.

Already, by hyperbole of expression, we say the gospel has gone to all lands, the Bible been translated into all tongues, and Christianity achieved a substantial victory over Satan's empire. Our vouchers for this, are Paris, London, Berlin, St Petersburg, Vienna, Edinboro, Glasgow, Dublin, Boston, New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Washington, etc., etc., the paragons of Christendom, like which, if the whole planet were, it would be ripe for the sickle of judgment! *Blood-shedding, adulterous, intemperate and mammon-loving, Christendom! Sabbath-breaking too!* And this, after 18 centuries, the paraded boast of pre-advent Millennialism! Blow the trumpet in Bethhaven! What a phalanx of able and scholarly men challenge attention to the fact that, “*Not one nation yet, in its general mass, has accepted Christianity, but only individuals, and, relatively to the population, few!*” (Thiersch.) If we ask what the prophets looked for, what the Apostles expected, and what John saw in vision, in this state of things, there is but one answer, and that is, not the conversion of the world, but the waxing of Anti-Christianity to its height, in the very midst of Christendom, the crisis, the conversion of Israel, and Advent of the Lord to Judgment. [West. Thousand Years. 452].

And now a hundred years later can anyone think things are better? It is imperative that we grasp this truth. If we fail to do so, we are warned by Paul [Ro 11:18,19]. The Gentiles had known of God before they were called but they rejected the knowledge they had of God. They overlooked the things which they could see. When they knew Him they glorified Him not as God. They changed His eternal Godhead into that of beasts or of men. They ran into vile affections such as homosexuality, lesbianism and every other vice. They saw the truth of God but did not like what they saw and God gave them up to a reprobate mind, [Ro 1:18-32]. They continued to carry on their idolatry, their wickedness, their sexual aberrations, their vile habits, their false worship in every nation and clime and tongue from the very beginning of time and still do in the mass until this day! The world scene—the world of the Gentiles—is worse today than ever before! When will this be changed? When the fullness of the Gentiles comes in?

FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES A GREAT TRANSFORMATION

There is this concept of *the fullness of the Gentiles*. What a great transformation is here predicted! The covering which now covers the nations shall be removed [Is 25:7-8]. And when will this be done? We set no dates. We do not attempt to put each predicted event into some local account. All such things, we believe, are to be left in the hands of Him who ruleth over all. We believe they will be perfectly manifest at the appropriate time.

THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES DOES NOT STAND ALONE

Rather we believe the *Fullness of the Gentiles* is directly related to the *Fullness of Israel*. We cannot disconnect the falling of Israel from the grafting in of the Gentiles— these are separate things but not unrelated. Thus when it shall turn to the Lord, and Israel shall have the veil taken away, and shall look on Him whom they pierced as a nation, that conversion will be the *Fullness of Israel*, which has lingered, lo, these two thousand years. This is not to be understood as the

events of one day only as was the beginning at Pentecost, but it is that which will run on throughout the millennial age. Such a great outpouring upon Israel will be greater for the nation than anything that has gone before! This, by the grace of God, will, result also in the *Fullness of the Gentiles*. If the fall of them be the riches of the world—and it was! And the loss of them the riches of the Gentiles—and it was! Then, the apostle asks, How much more their Fullness? That is, if the breaking off of Israel, when that nation rejected and Crucified the Lord of Glory, when God's chosen nation refused to recognize Jesus as Christ— if that brought untold riches to the world of the Gentiles and opened the gospel to all nations then, what will be the result of the conversion, the fullness of Israel as a nation?

The *Fullness* of Israel refers to the whole nation, not just a remnant, Ro 11:12. Now when we read of the *Fullness* of the Gentiles we are not to think that it means only a remnant of the Gentiles. This is to give the same term different values in the same context. If the fullness of Israel means the almost total number of Israel, will be saved it must have the same meaning in reference to the Gentiles. And if this is correct, then we are to anticipate, according to Paul, a greater in-gathering of Gentiles than this world has ever known before! We believe this is Paul's idea.

OTHER PROPHETIC EVENTS CONNECTED TO THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES

We have these things connected to other events. We notice a few of them:

It is the day the iniquity of Jacob shall be purged, Is 27:9; Ro 11:26.

It is the day the great trumpet shall be blown, Is 27:13; Mt 24:31; Re 11:15.

It is the day when Israel shall be given a heart to know the Lord, Je 24:7.

It is the day of the resurrection, Is 26:19; Da 12:2.

It is the day he wipes away tears from all faces, Is 25:8; Re 21:4.

This time of the fullness of the Gentiles then will be the production of the Lord Himself at His coming—it will not be brought about by the saints before Christ returns. This is no Post Millennial revival. Yet, the gospel will be used in bringing this fullness of the Gentiles in.

When God shall dispel Jewish darkness, and confer salvation on all Israel, he will enlighten the benighted Gentiles, and bring them into the glorious liberty of the children of God. He will bless them with his word, his Gospel, and his ordinances, by which they shall know their natural guilt and misery, the way of salvation by Divine grace reigning through Christ's righteousness, and the exercise of faith in Christ for eternal life. They will then be brought from barbarism to civilization, from treating one another with cruelty to kindness and brotherly love, from abominable idolatry to the true worship of God, and from brutal immoralities to that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. What a change will be accomplished on heathenish, Moahometan and antichristian Gentiles, when they shall be rescued from their ignorance and delusions, and enlightened with the

knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Such are the blessings which the converted Gentiles have enjoyed, and which are prepared for the other nations, when their fulness will come in. [Mason. *Divine Mystery*, 73. 1825].

THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES WILL BE AS MUCH GREATER THAN THEIR FIRST CONVERSION AS THE FULL HARVEST IS GREATER THAN THE FIRST FRUITS

These terms are pregnant with promise. The Fullness of Israel and the Fullness of the Gentiles means that the numbers of elect extend far beyond the numbers saved before hand just as the first fruits are exceeded by the harvest. This was typified by the Feast of Pentecost when the first fruits were presented before the Lord, Le 23:10. Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection and those he raised after His resurrection promise a much greater number will be raised from the dead, (1 Co 15:23; Mt 27:53). So Pentecost was the promise of the fullness of Israel and the fullness of the Gentiles. We need not think that God is limited. These terms, we believe, do not refer to mere remnants but the whole of both groups and this is not limited to the life time of a man but for the entire Millennium, a hundred years times ten. What great numbers will then be saved?

The text imports that when God shall bring in the fullness of the Gentiles, he will confer on them great and glorious privileges. God's removing Jewish blindness, and his bestowing salvation on all Israel, are mentioned in the context as glorious operations of Divine mercy and power. His bringing in the fullness of the Gentiles must be considered in the same way. When God gathered the Gentiles into the Church, at the beginning, and in the course of the Gospel dispensation, he bestowed great and precious blessings upon them. But when he shall gather the outcasts of the Gentiles, when their fullness shall come in, it will be a more glorious display of his almighty power and his everlasting love to the nations. He will then bring the residue of the Gentiles from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. [Mason. *Divine Mystery*, 73. 1825].

NUMBERS OF PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES WAIT IN THE DOCKET FOR FULFILLMENT

Beside Ro 11:12, 15 and 25 there is a mass of Scripture which refers to this time of great blessing not only to Israel but also to the Gentiles and that fact is constantly stated. We can give only a sampling. Among them are the following:

Gen 18:18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

Mal 1:11. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.

Psa 2:8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Num 14:21 But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

Psa 22:27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

Psa 65:5 By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea:

Psa 67:7 God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

Isa 52:10 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Psa 72:11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

Psa 72:17 His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Isa 52:10 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Hab 2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Hag 2:7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

Rev 15:4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

Luke 2:30-32 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Isa 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Isa 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

Isa 42:6 I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

Isa 49:22 Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

Isa 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Isa 60:3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Isa 66:12 For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees.

Isa 66:19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.

Jer 16:19 O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.

Let any student of Scripture make a list of unfilled prophecies referring to the Gentiles, and he will find an abundance of references which point to this fullness of the Gentiles which are waiting to be fulfilled.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE FROM SCHOLARS

Because this theme is so seldom set forth in pulpit or in our papers, let me give some supporting evidence from various writers to prove this is not a new doctrine.

Anderson wrote:

The coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles must not be confounded with the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). the one refers to spiritual blessing, the other to earthly power. Jerusalem is not to be the capital of the free nation, independent of Gentile power, until the true Son of David comes to claim the sceptre. [Anderson. *Coming Prince*. 149].

J.R. Graves in his message on Satan Dethroned set forth this position:

Christ and his Saints on the earth for 1000 years, during which time every curse but death will be removed; the fertility of the earth restored; the ferocity of animals contained the nations learn war no more; and all thrones as in all offices, from the highest to the lowest, filled, and all governments of the earth be administered, by the Saints of Christ in equity and peace. Then will truth spring out of the earth and righteousness look down from heaven; Christ, the once crucified, now earth's victorious and glorious King of Kings and Lord of lords, take the throne of his father David, and reign from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

Thus shall all nations of the world

In Abraham's promised seed be blessed.

Oh, scenes surpassing fable, and yet true--

Scenes of accomplished bliss, which who can see,

Through but in distant prospect, and not feel

His soul refreshed with foretaste of the promised joy?

[J.R. Graves. *Satan Dethroned* page 34].

This is the day when he takes away the rebuke of his people and from all the earth!

John Owen, in his work on Hebrews, affirms,

"Israel shall be a guide and blessing to the residue of the gentiles who shall seek after the Lord and may be entrusted with great empire and rule in the world." [Owen. Hebrews. Vol. 1, p.445].

In their Commentary on Romans Sandy and Headlam say:

St. Paul strengthens his statement by an argument drawn from the spiritual character of the Jewish people. If an event which has been so disastrous to the nation has had such a beneficial result, how much more beneficial will be the result of the entrance of the full complement of the nation into the Messianic kingdom? [Sandy-Headlam. *Epistle to Romans*. 11:12, 322]

The *Expositor's Bible Commentary*:

The logic of the verse compels us to take it in this sense, that as surely as Israel's defeat (identified with her stumbling) has brought the riches of God's grace to the Gentiles on a large scale, the conversion of Israel to her Messiah (v 26) will bring even greater blessing to the world. [Harrison. *Ex. Bible Com*. 120].

Moule says:

But if their partial fall be the world's wealth, and their lessening... their reduction, (a reduction in one aspect to a race of scattered exiles, in another to a mere remnant of 'Israelites indeed,') be the Gentiles' wealth, the occasion by which 'the unsearchable wealth of Messiah' (Eph. 3:8) has been as it were forced into Gentile receptacles, how much more their fullness, the filling of the dry channel with its ample ideal stream, the change from a believing remnant, fragments of a fragmentary people, to a believing nation, reanimated and reunited? What blessings for 'the world,' for 'the Gentiles,' may not come through the vehicle of such an Israel? [Moule. *Romans*. 11:12, p. 298].

Godet:

But their destination is nevertheless irrevocable; and through the overflowing of divine mercy (chap. 5:20) it will be realized in them at the period announced by the apostle, when, saved themselves, they will cause a stream of life from above to flow into the heart of Gentile Christendom (15;12, 15, and 25,26). [Godet. *Romans*. 11:29, p. 413].

The American Commentary:

In our view Paul teaches that when the great mass or multitude of the Gentiles shall have accepted a Jewish Savior and a salvation which is from the Jews, and shall enter into the messianic kingdom, then the Jews themselves, 'provoked to emulation,' will be ashamed to hold out longer in their opposition and exclusiveness, and Israel as a whole, perhaps 'the whole nation which shall then be in existence' (Prof. Turner), will accept of Jesus as their Messiah, and the unspeakably blessed influence of their reception within the Christian fold will extend all over the Gentile world. [A. N. Arnold. *American Commentary*, Ro 11:26. Note by D. B. Ford, p. 260].

West describes this great prophecy:

To the holy living, reserved in God's counsel to be the local and sustaining center of the Messianic Kingdom in victory on the earth, and whose "reception" is to be as "life from the dead" to the nations, Rom. 11:15, and their "fullness" the greater "riches of the Gentiles," 11:12, "the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom under all heavens" is given. Under Christ, they lead the world. The Gentile Powers have had the "Times of the Gentiles," and answered for their conduct. Israel's times in the kingdom now begin, the world a witness of the difference of administration in the new and better age from that which obtained in the age just buried with its crimes. It means that, by the will of God and the gift of the Son of Man, earth's sovereignty shall pass to the hands of God's ancient people, the kingdom be restored to Israel, and all the promises to Abraham and his literal believing seed be at last fulfilled. The "gifts and calling of God" to them are irreversible, a boon their own apostasy could not invalidate. Rom. 11:29, the gift of primogeniture, the gift of the land, the gift of their mission to be the bearer of the promises and collective mediator of salvation to the world. Their elect remnant was the nucleus of the church. Their elect remnant augmented to fullness, shall be the fullness of the Kingdom in the coming age. Their gathering, last struggle, conversion to Christ, regeneration by the Holy Spirit and political establishment in their own land as a "righteous nation," and their transcendent blessing to the nations are guaranteed by the covenant, promise and oath of God, and by a hundred most decisive scriptures in both Testaments, Ezk. 36: 24-28; 37:21-27; Zech. 12:10-14; Ro. 11:25, 33; Rev. 11:4-8; 12:10,11; 14: 1-5. [West. *Daniel's Great Prophecy*. 84].

One of the best commentaries on Ro 9,10, and 11, known to me is that of John Murray. His comments on Ro 11:12 are pertinent:

'How much more their fullness.' There should be no question but this is the fullness of Israel as a people. The stumbling was theirs, the fall was theirs, theirs was the trespass, and theirs the loss. The fullness, therefore, can have no other reference. What is 'their fullness'? ...No word could serve to convey the thought of the thoroughness and completeness of this contrast better than the term 'fullness'. For if 'fullness' conveys any idea it is that of completeness. Hence nothing less than a restoration of Israel as a people to faith, privilege, and blessing can satisfy the terms of this passage. The *argument* of the apostle is not, however, the restoration of Israel; it is the blessing accruing to the Gentiles from Israel's 'fullness'. The 'fullness' of Israel, with the implications stated above, is presupposed and from it is drawn the conclusion that the fullness of Israel will involve for the Gentiles a much greater enjoyment of gospel blessing than that occasioned by Israel's unbelief. Thus there awaits the Gentiles, in their distinctive identity as such, gospel blessing for surpassing anything experienced during the period of Israel's apostasy, and this unprecedented enrichment will be occasioned by the conversion of Israel on a scale commensurate with that of their earlier disobedience. [Murray. *New International Com.* Rom. 11:12, 78-79].

CONCLUSION

According to this interpretation of the text we are to anticipate great blessings to both Jews and Gentiles by the Lord Jesus Christ who is able to do above and beyond what we can think [Ep 2:20]. The nation Israel is to come to a time which is referred to as the *fullness of Israel*— all Israel is to be saved! This will then result in the Gentiles coming to a time called the *fullness of the Gentiles*—all the nations shall be saved! These great and glorious blessings will fulfill all those wonderful OT prophecies which the saints of God have waited for through the ages. The cry, “How long” so frequently, so pathetically asked, will finally be answered! When Christ Jesus brings these things to pass, He will be received by the Jews as the Messiah [Ze 13:6] and the fullness of Israel will then be made an overflowing to the Gentiles [Is 66:12] and this will run to the ends of the earth:

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Is 11:9

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!