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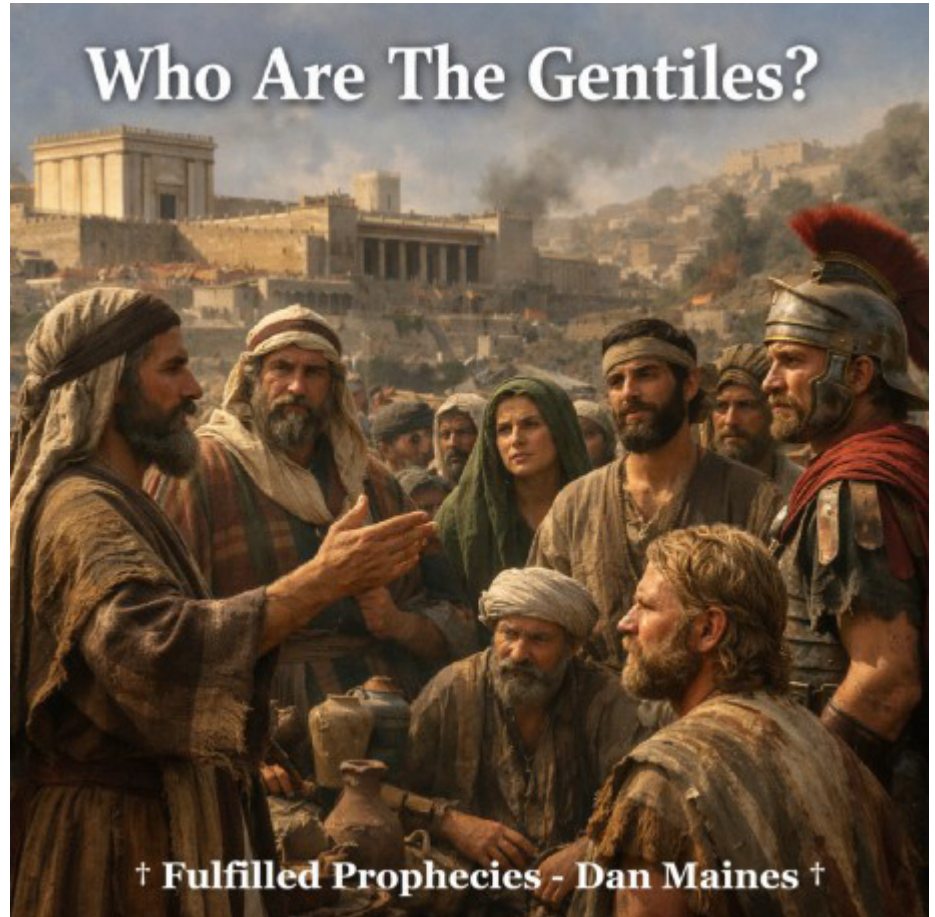
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## Who Are The Gentiles?



By Dan Maines

## Who Are The Gentiles?

### Introduction

† We've spent a lot of time studying the question, Who is Israel? That's important, because Scripture is deeply connected to the story of Israel. But if we stop there and never ask who the Gentiles are, we miss half the picture the Bible is presenting. (Romans 3:29)

† Many churches rarely explain the Gentiles in depth. Because of that, people often assume the Gentiles are simply everyone who is not Jewish. But the Bible's use of the word is more specific and covenantal than that simple definition. (Ephesians 2:11-12)

† When we understand who the Gentiles were in the biblical story, we see the incredible scope of God's plan, a plan that always included the nations from the beginning, even though Israel had a unique covenant role in history. (Genesis 12:3)

### **Genesis 12:3**

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."

† From the beginning God declared that Abraham's calling was not just about one ethnic group, but about blessing all the families of the earth. The nations were always part of God's plan. (Galatians 3:8)

† The word nations in the Old Testament is often the same word translated Gentiles. It refers to the peoples outside of Israel's covenant nation. (Deuteronomy 32:8)

† This shows that Gentiles were not an afterthought in the Bible. God always intended for the nations to be blessed through what He was doing with Abraham and Israel. (Isaiah 49:6)

### **Deuteronomy 14:21**

"You shall not eat anything which dies of itself. You may give it to the stranger who is in your town, so that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a stranger; for you are a holy people to the LORD

your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

† Here we see a clear distinction between Israel and the foreigner. The foreigner was not under the covenant law the same way Israel was. This shows the Gentiles were the nations outside the covenant system. (Leviticus 20:24)

† This distinction was not about biological superiority but about covenant identity. Israel was the nation set apart to carry God's law and promises during that period of redemptive history. (Deuteronomy 7:6)

† The Gentile nations existed alongside Israel but were not participants in the covenant structure given at Sinai. (Psalm 147:19-20)

### **Isaiah 49:6**

He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the protected ones of Israel;

I will also make You a light of the nations

So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

† The prophets clearly said the Messiah's mission would reach beyond Israel. The salvation of God would extend to the Gentiles. (Luke 2:32)

† Israel had a covenant role as the vessel through which that light would come into the world. But the goal was always broader than Israel alone. (Romans 9:4-5)

† This is why the New Testament repeatedly speaks of Gentiles being brought into what God promised long before. (Acts 13:47)

## **Acts 17:26**

and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

† This verse proves that all nations come from the same human origin. The distinction between Jew and Gentile was never racial in its foundation. (Genesis 10:32)

† The separation that developed later in Scripture was covenantal. Israel was chosen as the nation through which God revealed His law and promises. (Deuteronomy 4:7-8)

† Understanding this prevents the mistake of thinking the Bible is about racial divisions. The story is about God's covenant work in history. (Romans 3:29-30)

## **Ephesians 2:11**

Therefore remember that previously you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision" which is performed in the flesh by human hands

† Paul describes Gentiles as those outside the covenant sign of circumcision. This was not just a racial distinction, it was a covenant distinction between those inside the Mosaic system and those outside it. (Romans 3:1-2)

† Gentiles were people who lived outside Israel's covenant structure, outside the temple system, outside the law of Moses. (Acts 14:16)

† This is why Paul reminds them of what their situation once was before Christ. (Ephesians 2:12)

## **Ephesians 2:12**

remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the people of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

† Gentiles were not participants in Israel's covenant system. They were strangers to the covenants and promises that had been given to Israel. (Romans 9:4)

† This does not mean God ignored the nations. It means the covenant administration at that time was centered in Israel. (Deuteronomy 4:7-8)

† The gospel announced that this separation was being removed through Christ. (Ephesians 2:13)

## **Ephesians 2:13**

But now in Christ Jesus you who previously were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

† The Gentiles who were once far off are now brought near through Christ. This is the fulfillment of what the prophets

predicted. (Isaiah 11:10)

† The distance was not geographical, it was covenantal. Gentiles were outside the covenant structure that existed under Moses. (Galatians 4:4-5)

† Through Christ that barrier was removed and the nations were brought into the blessings promised through Abraham. (Galatians 3:14)

### **Acts 15:14**

Simeon has described how God first concerned Himself about taking a people for His name from among the Gentiles.

† The apostles recognized that the inclusion of Gentiles was the direct fulfillment of the prophets. God was gathering people from the nations into His covenant family. (Amos 9:11-12)

† This moment in Acts shows the early church understanding that what was happening was not a new idea but the fulfillment of what God had promised long before. (Isaiah 11:10)

† The Gentile mission was therefore not an interruption of God's plan but the completion of it. (Acts 13:47)

### **Romans 9:24**

namely us, whom He also called, not only from among Jews, but also from among Gentiles,

† The New Testament repeatedly explains that God's calling was never limited to Jews alone. Gentiles were always part of

His purpose. (Acts 15:14)

† The gospel revealed something that had been hidden in earlier ages, that the nations would share fully in the promises through Christ. (Ephesians 3:6)

† This does not erase Israel's historical role. Instead it shows how Israel's story was the means through which God reached the nations. (Romans 15:8-9)

### **Romans 15:8-9**

For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision in behalf of the truth of God, to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written:

"THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING PRAISES TO YOUR NAME."

† Paul explains that Christ fulfilled the promises given to Israel and that those promises overflowed to the Gentiles. (Genesis 12:3)

† The salvation of the Gentiles therefore confirms the truth of God's promises to Abraham. The blessing promised to all nations has now come through Christ. (Galatians 3:14)

† The inclusion of the Gentiles demonstrates the worldwide scope of God's kingdom. (Psalm 117:1)

### **Galatians 3:28**

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

† Under the old covenant the world was divided between Israel and the nations. In Christ that covenant division has been removed. (Ephesians 2:14)

† The gospel creates one united people of God from every nation. The old covenant distinctions no longer define membership in God's people. (Colossians 3:11)

† This fulfills the promise that the nations would share in the blessings given through Abraham. (Genesis 12:3)

## **Historical References**

† Justin Martyr explained that the calling of the nations was foretold by the prophets and fulfilled through Christ's work among the Gentiles. (Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho)

† Irenaeus wrote that God gathered people from every nation through Christ, fulfilling the promise that the nations would be blessed through Abraham. (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.12)

† Eusebius recorded that the gospel spread rapidly among the nations after the fall of Jerusalem, demonstrating that the kingdom of God had moved beyond the old covenant center. (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History)

† Josephus explained that the Jewish people used the term nations to describe all peoples outside the covenant nation of Israel. (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews)

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† Understanding who the Gentiles were helps us read the New Testament correctly. Many passages are describing the transition from the old covenant world centered in Israel to the

worldwide kingdom of Christ. (Hebrews 8:13)

† When people misunderstand the Gentiles, they often misunderstand prophecy and the purpose of Israel in Scripture. The Bible is describing the expansion of God's kingdom to all nations. (Matthew 24:14)

† Today the distinction that once separated Jew and Gentile in the covenant system no longer exists. The gospel has brought all nations into one body under Christ. (Ephesians 2:14-16)

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q** Were Gentiles always part of God's plan?

**A** Yes. God promised Abraham that all families of the earth would be blessed through him. (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8)

**Q** Were Gentiles originally outside Israel's covenant?

**A** Yes. Gentiles were strangers to the covenants and promises given to Israel during the Mosaic age. (Ephesians 2:12; Romans 9:4)

**Q** What changed through Christ?

**A** Christ removed the covenant barrier and brought the nations into the blessings promised to Abraham. (Ephesians 2:13; Galatians 3:14)

**Q** Does the word Gentile simply mean non-Jew?

**A** Not exactly. In the biblical context the word refers to the nations outside Israel's covenant system during the Mosaic age. The distinction was covenantal, not biological. (Ephesians 2:11-12; Deuteronomy 14:21)

**Q** Did God ignore the Gentile nations in the Old Testament?

**A** No. God always intended to bless the nations through Abraham. Israel was chosen as the covenant nation through whom that blessing would come to the world. (Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 49:6)

**Q** Why were Gentiles described as far off in the New Testament?

**A** They were far off from the covenants, the temple system, and the promises given through Israel under the Mosaic covenant. Christ removed that covenant separation. (Ephesians 2:12-13)

**Q** Did the prophets speak about the Gentiles receiving salvation?

**A** Yes. The prophets repeatedly foretold that the Messiah would bring salvation to the nations and that the Gentiles would glorify God. (Isaiah 49:6; Romans 15:8-12)

**Q** Does the distinction between Jew and Gentile still exist in God's covenant today?

**A** No. Under Christ the old covenant barrier has been removed. All believers are united in one body regardless of their background. (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14-16)

**Q** Are Gentiles still separate from Israel in God's plan today?

**A** No. Under the new covenant the separation that existed under the law of Moses has been removed. Christ made both groups one people in Him. (Ephesians 2:14-16; Galatians 3:28)

**Q** Does the Bible teach that God has two separate covenant peoples, Jews and Gentiles?

**A** No. The gospel unites people from every nation into one body under Christ. There is one people of God, not two separate covenant groups. (Ephesians 3:6; Romans 10:12)

**Q** Why does the New Testament talk so much about Jews and Gentiles?

**A** Because the apostles were living during the transition from the old covenant world centered in Israel to the new covenant kingdom that includes all nations. That historical shift is the background of many New Testament passages. (Acts 15:14-18; Romans 15:8-12)

**Q** Who are the Gentiles?

**A** In the biblical sense the Gentiles were the nations outside the covenant nation of Israel. They were the peoples who did not belong to Israel's covenant system under the law of Moses and were therefore described as uncircumcision and strangers to the covenants of promise. (Ephesians 2:11-12; Romans 9:24)

**Q** Who were the Gentiles?

**A** The Gentiles were the nations of the world who lived outside Israel's covenant structure during the Mosaic age. They were not participants in the temple system, the law of Moses, or the covenant promises given to Israel. Through Christ that covenant separation was removed and people from every nation were brought near to God. (Ephesians 2:13; Romans 15:8-9)

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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**Source Index**

† Genesis 12:3; Deuteronomy 14:21; Isaiah 49:6; Acts 17:26;  
Ephesians 2:11-13; Acts 15:14; Romans 9:24; Romans 15:8-9;  
Galatians 3:28

† Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.12

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

† Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews

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