

"The Times of the Gentiles"

By Apostle Don McIndoo
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Text – "That these sayings which ye shall write, shall be kept, and shall be manifested unto the Gentiles, that through the fullness of the Gentiles, the remnant of their seed who shall be scattered forth upon the face of the earth, because of their unbelief, may be brought in, or may be brought to a knowledge of me, their Redeemer. And then will I gather them in from the four quarters of the earth; and then will I fulfill the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel." (3 Nephi 7:28, 29)

Here we find Jesus using an unusual, and oft misunderstood expression; namely, **"...the fullness of the Gentiles...."** This expression is clearly identified by Nephi: **"And now, the thing which our father meaneth concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through the fullness of the Gentiles, is, that in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea, for the space of many years and many generations, after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fullness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed;"**

(1 Nephi 4:16)

Jesus also spoke to His disciples about the future, but it must have seemed to them a very dark and foreboding future: **"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." (Luke 21:20-25, 32)**

We recognize that Jesus was warning the disciples, hence the entire church, of the forthcoming **invasion of Israel** and the **desolation of the Holy City** by the Roman army. The historian, Barnes, tells us, **"No less than one million, one hundred thousand perished in the siege of Jerusalem. More than ninety thousand were led into captivity."** After 135 A. D. no Jews were allowed by Rome to be in the city. This is not merely a portrayal of a wrathful and vengeful God as some would propose; it is fulfillment of countless prophecies given to Israel by a God whose Word cannot be changed nor frustrated.

As the Lord had revealed through the prophet Isaiah so long before: **"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."**

(Isaiah 55:10, 11)

A specific revelation from the throne of God which would have great impact upon the Israelite nation was revealed to His servant Moses: **"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou**

mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” (Deuteronomy 30:15-19)

A few of those prophets to whom God revealed His covenant with Israel; a covenant of blessing and life if believing and obedient but cursing and death if unbelieving and disobedient are seen in the list below:

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|-------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|----------|
| <u>1.</u> Deuteronomy 4:26-29 | (Moses) | <u>5.</u> 1 Nephi 5:251, 252 | (Nephi) |
| <u>2.</u> Isaiah 29:1 – 4 | (Isaiah) | <u>6.</u> 2 Nephi 7:11, 12 | (Jacob) |
| <u>3.</u> Jeremiah 24:9, 10 | (Jeremiah) | <u>7.</u> Jacob 3:31 – 36 | (Zenos) |
| <u>4.</u> Amos 9:9 | (Amos) | <u>8.</u> 3 Nephi 7:27, 28 | (Christ) |

“... and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Strong’s identifies this expression, *“times of the Gentiles”* as being a specifically set time. *i. e.*, Jerusalem shall be dominated and ruled in an oppressive manner by Gentile nations for a specific number of years. This time of Gentile domination is not specified by a date; rather, by an event all the world will recognize, and which will have a great impact upon world events.

One of my favorite commentators, Albert Barnes, wrote, *“This passage has been understood very differently by different expositors.”* Many commentators identify it as being the “Church age”. Others identify its closing to be at the coming of Christ when all pagans will be converted, and most of the modern internet commentators relate it to the 3 ½ year period of tribulation when the great Antichrist will dominate all. It seems to make no difference to them that there is not a single reference to an Antichrist, with a capital A, in the Holy Bible. And the 3 ½ year period they so commonly refer to is incorrectly applied to their concept of the future.

In our text from the Book of Mormon and in this passage from the Bible, Jesus used two similar sounding terms we need to understand. These expressions are *“...the fullness of the Gentiles...”* and *“...until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”* Many commentators believe they both refer to the same thing. That is not the case, but both do relate to our subject in this study. So we need to carefully analyze these words of Christ in an endeavor to understand their impact upon the world, upon Israel and upon the church today.

Romans 11:25 (just as Christ’s words in 3 Ne.) – *“until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”*

fulness – Strong’s # 4138 - *to be filled, to be complete or replete (plentifully supplied)*

Luke 21:24 – *“...until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”*

fulfilled – Strong’s # 4137 – *to be completed, to come to an end or expire*

As the Apostle Paul so clearly states in Romans 11:25, *“Blindness in part is happened to Israel...”* As we contemplate this domination of Jerusalem because of that blindness, let’s look at an ancient prophecy given by Moses 1400 years before and one by Jesus while He was in ancient America several years before this occasion:

“ And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: (Deuteronomy 28:13) Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long; and there shall be no might in thine hand. (Verse 32) The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. (Verse 36) The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.” (Verses 43 & 44)

“And after that ye were blessed, then fulfilleth the Father the covenant which he made with Abraham, saying, In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed, unto the pouring out of the Holy Ghost through me upon the Gentiles, which blessing upon the Gentiles, shall make them mighty above all, unto the scattering of my people, O house of Israel: “ (3 Nephi 9:65)

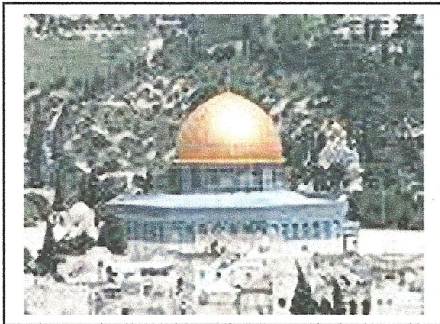
So let's just examine a brief, graphic representation of that Gentile domination of Jerusalem about which Christ was speaking to His disciples:

OUTLINE OF GENTILE DOMINION OF JERUSALEM

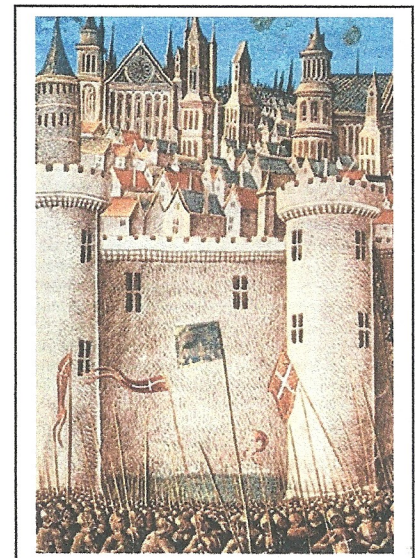
70–324 A.D. Ruled by Roman Empire. The Second temple was destroyed and the people sold among the Gentile nations. It was renamed *Aelia Capitolina*. Now, without a Temple, Jews gather in small community groups among the nations and their religious life centers around the synagogue.



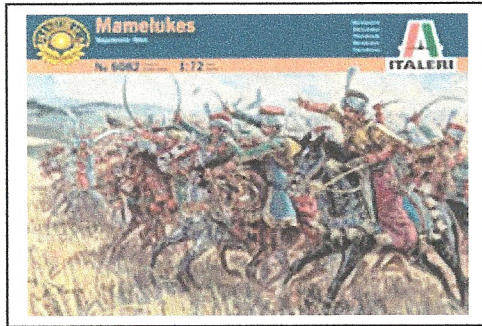
324 – 638 Under the dominion of the Roman Byzantine Empire. Byzantine Christians rule in Palestine with Constantinople the capital of the Eastern Division of the Old Roman Empire. Small numbers of Jews still live in Israel..



638 - 1099 Jerusalem falls under Muslim rule. In 691 A. D. the Dome of the Rock was constructed and still dominates the Holy Site.



1099 – 1244 Under the dominion of European Crusaders who rule intermittently.



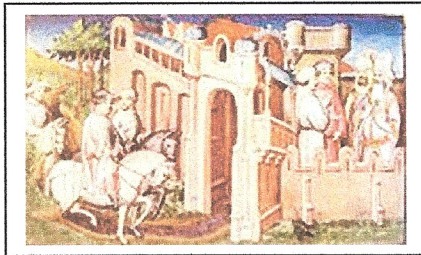
1260 – 1517 Jerusalem was ruled by the Mamelukes of Egypt. They were a nation of slaves used by Egypt as mercenaries who later took over the rule of the nation.

1517 – 1917 Ottoman Turks under Saladin conquer Palestine. The present walls that surround the old city of Jerusalem are built.

1917 – 1948 After WW I the British rule Palestine under a mandate from the League of Nations. British rule becomes harsh and oppressive. After WW II Jerusalem came under British mandate.

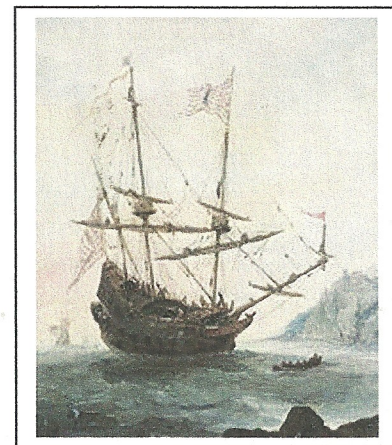
1948 Israel established as a nation by the U. N. However, the establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948 did not fulfill the prophecy of Jesus, for the city of Jerusalem was still dominated by Muslim nations.

This Gentile domination did not just affect Israel and Jerusalem. With the conversion of Emperor Constantine of Rome, Christianity spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire, and far beyond.



In **1271** when Marco Polo began his journey to unknown China, his party was able to spend their nights in Christian monasteries across Asia throughout their journey.

In **1419** the Atlantic islands off the coast of Northern Africa were discovered and colonized by the Portuguese. Then in **1487** Portuguese sailors rounded the Cape of Good Hope and sailed into the Indian Ocean, opening up all of Africa and the islands of the Indian Ocean to colonization.



In **1492** Columbus made his epic journey to the islands of the New World and the colonization of North America and South America began.



In 1519 when Spain's Magellan and in 1579 when England's Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the world, the entire world was opened up to colonization by Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, England and Germany. Within a few decades every portion of Asia, Africa, North America, South America, the islands of the Caribbean, the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans had been colonized by European nations. Where these explorers traveled, soon arrived Christian missionaries.

Strong's definition of the expression Jesus used, *"...until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."* makes it clear that this period of Gentile domination will come to a close. But what shall bring this period of Gentile power and domination to its conclusion? I would like to present two scriptures which I believe answer this question with exactness. The first is found in the Book of Commandments and the second comes from the words of Christ, found in 3 Nephi 7. Let me project them on the screen:

"And this I have told you concerning Jerusalem, and when that day shall come, shall a remnant be scattered among all nations, but they shall be gathered again; but they shall remain until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth. And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound; and when the time of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel; but they receive it not, for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men; in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" (Book of Commandments 48:25-27)

"Behold, because of their belief in me, saith the Father, and because of the unbelief of you, O house of Israel, in the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that the fullness of these things shall be made known unto them. And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; And if they shall do all these things, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them; And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them;"
(3 Nephi 7:31, 34-36)

Perhaps the most specific prophecy about the end of Gentile domination of Jerusalem is to be found in the prophecy of Jesus Christ as He stood in America and talked to those believers who had escaped the great destruction which took place at His crucifixion. Among them were descendants of Central American Lamanites. He was standing in the homeland of the Maya people. Let's read these momentous words as I place them on the screen:

"Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people, be fulfilled; and then shall Jerusalem be inhabited again with my people, and it shall be the land of their inheritance. And verily, I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place, that I shall gather in from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion. And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign, for verily I say unto you, that when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles,

(continued)

Therefore, when these works, and the work which shall be wrought among you hereafter, shall come forth from the Gentiles unto your seed, which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity; And when these things come to pass, that thy seed shall begin to know these things, it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel.” (3 Nephi 9:85-87, 91, 93)

This sign which shall be an indication of the deliverance of Jerusalem from the bondage of Gentile nations can be said to have taken place in the year 1953, when the first 26 members of the Maya people had received the Book of Mormon and been baptized into the Church of Christ. Ministry had been ordained and two congregations organized among the Mayan people, direct descendants of some of the very people who had been in the presence of Christ when He gave this prophecy.

This was the sign of which Christ had spoken, and just fourteen years later, in June of 1967, Jerusalem was liberated from Jordanian control in the Six-Day War, and for the first time in nearly two thousand years the Jews were again in control of Jerusalem. The Jewish Quarter lay in ruins but rebuilding began in earnest.

Important to our study today is the fact that it is also the era of which Christ had prophesied to His disciples, the times of the Gentiles being fulfilled. That time when Gentile power and domination of the world shall come to an end. This raises an interesting question in one's mind; namely, do world events and history bear out the fact that the world-wide Gentile domination had come to an end? Let's examine one more chart to see

END OF GENTILE DOMINATION AND COLONIALISM

(Nations of Africa)

	<u>NATION</u>	<u>COLONIAL RULER</u>	<u>OBTAINED FREEDOM</u>
1.	Belgian Congo	Belgium	1960 *
2.	Tanzania	Germany/England	1964 *
3.	Zanzibar	Germany/England	1963 *
4.	Kenya	England	1963 *
5.	Uganda	England	1962 *
6.	Algeria	France	1962 *
7.	Chad	France	1962 *
8.	Madagascar	France	1960 *
9.	Span West Africa	Spain	1958 *
10.	Mauritania	France	1960 *
11.	Angola	Portugal	1975 *
12.	Mali	France	1958 *
13.	Sierra Leone	England	1961 *
14.	Zimbabwe	England	1965 *
15.	Botswana	England	1965 *
16.	Mozambique	Portugal	1974 *

(Some of the Nations of Asia)

17.	India	England	1947
18.	Pakistan	England	1947
19.	Vietnam	France	1954
20.	Malayasia	England	1963 *

21.	Cambodia	France	1953
22.	Indonesia	Holland	1945
23.	Philippines	Spain/U.S.	1946
24.	New Guinea	Holland/Ger/Aust	1975 *

(dates in red indicate a time within ten years of 1967)

Conclusion

How important and dramatic the ancient words of prophecy! Vital world events fall into place around them. They show us the validity of what God had revealed to His ancient prophets so long ago. ***“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*** (Isaiah 55:10, 11)

One by one, as we see them fulfilled our confidence in a living God grows ever stronger. His prophetic word is sent to prepare us for that which is to come. This study should prepare each of us for the momentous day in which we live. As the Lord revealed to the early church it will be a day when ***“...the whole earth shall be in commotion,...”*** But it is of greater importance for the church to understand ***“...it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel.”*** (3 Nephi 9:93)