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## Could you please explain what is meant with the "fulfillment" of "the times of the Gentiles?"

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The Bible uses this particular term only once, in Luke 21:24. It is important to notice the context.

Christ had been asked by some of His disciples when the temple would be destroyed (Luke 21:5-7). In reviewing the parallel passage in Matthew 24:1-3, we learn that they had also asked Him when the end of the age--the end of this present evil civilization--would occur, and when He would return--apparently believing that all of these events would be interconnected.

Christ began to warn of coming religious deception, wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences, and fearful sights and great signs from heaven. He explained that all these were the beginning of sorrows--the beginning of the end.

He continued to warn about the coming Great Tribulation--a time of war and persecution of God's people and the modern descendants of the physical nations of Israel and Judah (For information on the modern identity of these ancient peoples, please read our free booklet, "The Fall and Rise of Britain and America."). Christ said that Jerusalem would be destroyed or made desolate AT THAT TIME; that is, at the time of the Great Tribulation.

This is important to realize because some have erroneously concluded that Christ, when speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem and the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles, was referring to the Roman invasion of the city in 70 A.D., when the ancient temple was destroyed--or of the many subsequent incidents in the past when Jerusalem was attacked by Gentile armies and occupied by Gentile nations. However, those invasions, and especially the one by the Romans in

70 A.D., were just mild and partial forerunners of what is prophesied to happen in the future.

We must realize that Christ speaks of the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles IN THE CONTEXT of the GREAT TRIBULATION.

Notice Luke 21:20-24:

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that ALL THINGS which are written may be FULFILLED. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be GREAT DISTRESS [i.e., Great Tribulation] in the land and WRATH [the wrath of Satan, compare Revelation 12:12] upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles UNTIL THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES ARE FULFILLED."

In the parallel account, in Matthew 24, it is even more obvious that the context of Christ's statement regarding the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles is still future and related to the time of the Great Tribulation. Beginning in Matthew 24:15, we read Christ's words, as follows:

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies IN THOSE DAYS! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For THEN there will be GREAT TRIBULATION, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elects' sake those days will be shortened... Immediately AFTER the

TRIBULATION of THOSE DAYS the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. THEN the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will SEE the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:15-30).

Regarding the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles, notice the following excerpts from our free booklet, "Is That in the Bible?--The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation!":

"We read in Revelation 11:1-2 that an angel of God tells John: 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months [or 3-1/2 years].'

"Some rightly point out that the term 'temple' or 'temple of God' in the New Testament can refer to God's Church [compare Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17]. They claim that the reference in Revelation 11:1-2 speaks exclusively to the Church. Although the Church might be included here, the more obvious and intended meaning is a reference to a literal temple in Jerusalem. After all, the Gentiles will tread the holy city (!) underfoot for 3-1/2 years, and the court, which is outside the temple, will be given to those Gentiles. It is difficult to see how all of these references could just exclusively refer to the Church.

"Also, a distinction is made in Revelation 11:1-2 between the temple and those who worship there. If the temple were meant to exclusively describe the Church, it would be difficult to determine who those would be who worship there.

"The Nelson Study Bible comments: 'John is given a reed like a measuring rod, much like that used by Ezekiel (see Ezek. 40: 3, 5) in his vision of the measuring of the temple (see Ezek. 40-48)... This is the temple of the tribulation period that will eventually be desecrated (see 13:14, 15; Dan. 9:27;

Luke 21:24; 2 Thess. 2:4)... Luke 21:24 prophesies that the Gentiles will tread the holy city underfoot until "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Apparently the period of forty-two months is the conclusion of "the times of the Gentiles." "Gentile" here may also be translated "nations" (v. 9; 10:11)."

Some have speculated whether or not the times of the Gentiles--the times of Gentile rule over the world--have already begun, and in what year they began, or, rejecting the concept that they have begun, they have tried to figure out when they will begin. Both attempts are rather futile.

It is true, of course, that throughout human history, Gentile kingdoms have ruled this world, as discussed in the book of Daniel and in the book of Revelation. The prophets Daniel and John describe the appearance of four world-ruling Gentile kingdoms on this earth (the ancient Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greco-Macedonian Empire and the Roman Empire). They add that the Roman Empire would experience ten revivals after the fall of ancient Rome. History confirms that nine of those ten revivals have already occurred (under three "Barbarian" powers; under Justinian; under Charlemagne; under Otto the Great; under Charles V; under Napoleon I; and under Hitler and Mussolini). We also note that the final revival--a United States of Europe, ultimately being led by ten nations or groups of nations--is forming in this present time (For more information, please read our free booklet, "Europe in Prophecy.").

But it is also true that powerful nations of Israelite descent (especially of the ancient and modern house of Israel, including the British Commonwealth and the United States of America), have ruled, at times, over parts of the world. We can therefore not say--and the Bible does not proclaim this at all--that only Gentile nations ruled the world since the ancient Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.

Christ's statement of the fulfillment or conclusion of the times of powerful Gentile rule is still future--relating to the time when ALL "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and

ever" (Revelation 11:15). This prophecy does not refer just to Gentile kingdoms, but to ALL the human kingdoms of this world--past, present and future--whether of Gentile or non-Gentile origin.

When Christ returns, He will set up the Kingdom of GOD here on this earth. Feeble and incompetent, misleading and misled human beings will no longer rule this world. Rather, God the Father will give to Jesus Christ "dominion and glory and a kingdom, That ALL peoples, nations, and languages should SERVE HIM. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And HIS KINGDOM the one Which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14).

But God will NOT rule ALONE. Rather, He will rule with His "saints"--His people--true and converted Christians who by that time will be changed to immortal Spirit beings and become BORN-AGAIN members of the Family of God. It is THEN that "the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever... and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom... THEN the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Daniel 7:18, 22, 27).

Christ's statement of the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles primarily refers to the end-time revival of the ancient Roman Empire and its occupation of the city of Jerusalem for about three-and-a-half years, prior to the return of Jesus Christ. When Christ returns, He will make an end of Gentile, as well as non-Gentile rule. THEN--and NOT before then--the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled.

Christ's specific reference to the times of the Gentiles is primarily connected with the FUTURE, when Gentiles will trample and occupy Jerusalem--and the FULFILLMENT of the times of the Gentiles is obviously future as well. Even though Gentiles might have occupied Jerusalem in the past, these were not the END TIME events Christ was talking about in Matthew 24 and Luke 21.

Christ spoke of a FUTURE occupation of Jerusalem through Gentile powers, which will occur AT THE TIME of the Great Tribulation. Then, the times of the Gentiles will find their fulfillment.

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