

Fullness of the Gentiles

Travis Bennett Convocation 2014

3 Things:

When I say brothers...

Please hold your questions until I'm done... write them down.

Sit back and relax, but listen... this can be difficult if you lose your place... it's a sustained thought.

In prayer invite a taste of this fullness to be amongst us even now...

Romans 11:25 *"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."*

Gentile Fullness has a purpose... and because it was necessary that a mystery should accompany it until it's unveiling, that Fullness then, has a timing associated within this context, as the mystery surrounding the blindness will not last forever, but rather is calculated. And that the God-architect of this great mystery, which used as His chief tool a historical suffering blindness, imposed by the rejection of His incarnate Son's work, **does so**, "until" a sufficient time for the Spirit imparted revelation to be given in fullness, says something about that God. **It screams that the fullness** in our text has a source and fountainhead from which it springs. That is the subject matter before us this morning... What kind of God is so full in and of Himself that He blackens the corporate soul of the natural Jew... after having given them the dawning light of revelation, in written Word, Temple cult and founding Fathers, etc., and then plainly foretells their falling away by His prophets in that written Word... **"Until,"**... He finishes all His historical resolve for His creatures, letting the very existence of the Jew come to the brink of final global extinction at the time of the end, and then brings a provoking, **"fullness"** just in the nick of preplanned providential time for a glorious corporate awakening at the return of His Son? What kind of God conceives these things? **Our Great God, my brothers, does all this and so much more.** You see this weekend we're after more than just the plan and sequence of prophetic events... **we want the meaning driving them.** Otherwise the text is just as lost on us, and we stand in that same darkness, Spiritless in our approach and understanding. Because to not see that meaning, and its intention is to stare blindly in the fullness of the suns beam... listen, Quote...

“There is something about suffering that opens up the issues of truth and reality as nothing else can. The only thing that can be more tragic for us Jews is to have suffered ultimately and still not to have properly understood what that suffering meant in the intention of God, because we could not bring ourselves to believe that God was its author.” So penned Art Katz, in (The Holocaust as Judgment, Thinking the Unthinkable: Where was God?).

And so if this Romans 11:25 imposed blind-hearted darkness, this veil... is to give way to meaning... by reason of its being understood and then lifted out of mystery, and therefore the dawning **Son**-light of hope filled fullness is to arise, I ask you? What will be the tools summoned by our great God to lift that night of the corporate Jewish soul? I believe there are two spelled out for us in the text.

One, I submit to you that only more light, that is, the communication of spirit to flesh through illumination...will bring the desired result. Remember the text says, “*For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery...*” Ignorance is the absence of knowledge and keeps the mind in a place of occupied exclusion; it’s a, “*seeing, but not seeing*” and, “*hearing, but not hearing*” type of ignorant blindness. But the blind darkness in our text is **not just** the lack of information assimilated for understanding, no! This darkness is also a binding of the will through enslavement to sin and death, and therefore separation from life and light. When you couple that with the direct Sovereign imposition of that blackened death until the appointed time of lifting, and the historical challenges of change that were thrust upon the nation of Israel just before Christ’s first coming...you can begin to see the full orbed dilemma the natural Jews are suffering under. So what’s the answer? I believe it requires a light source sufficient to communicate an eternal solution, not merely a temporal one...but one that will eradicate this ignorant darkness by reason of deliverance, that is the only hope... as the Psalmist says in, 36:9 “*In Your light we see light...*” It’s the hope of something greater than that of 2 Corinthians 3, in which light shone on Moses face, which glory was, “*passing away*” that is, it had no vessel with which to remain in fullness because it came from God externally through absorption, and was hidden by cloud and covering. Not that Moses was not regenerate, he was, but the fullness of the Spirit waited for a different time. That is to say it was an administration of death brought through external law and therefore could not deliver because the heart remained untouched by its message if not understood properly, and therefore clouded and veiled, blinded and hidden, and was therefore powerless to deliver. Hear 2 Cor. 3:13-16 “*...unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains*

unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” And so Moses could not deliver from death, but rather through law appeals to the pride of fallen man and actually reinforces the blindness of heart and mind by reason of its veil, causing the truth to be rejected, and self-righteousness to be pursued in its place.

In contrast, Stephen, after Christ's incarnate revelation made more known by the winds of coming fullness at Pentecost, having preached Jesus to the Jewish Council at Jerusalem in Acts 7, and as we know he was stoned for that great witness, **has a greater fullness** and a greater effect. But listen to his indictment in 7:51; *“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do you.”* Think back to my previous quote... meaning must be the desired result... and so to be, *“...stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.”* is to be unwilling to turn to truth, because of unrelenting adherence to tradition instead of Scripture. They wouldn't budge even in the presents of revealed truth because it finds no fertile ground in the hardened heart and blinded mind... thereby proving death spiritually by the rejection of its message. And uncircumcised in heart and ear, is to be unable to see spiritual things correctly because of the dead spirit within as they are veiled, and therefore blinded, closed off by reason of it, as it deceives you into thinking you are doing what you could never do, i.e., worshiping God, **apart from God**. However Stephen's indictment and then life-giving act clearly shows the, “meaning” and therefore the answer to the, “*mystery*” which delivers from the veiled ignorant blindness, because of its effect. But lest we miss the implications and therefore the crucial element... **His... face... shone...** as that of an angel, while facing death, the very thing from which Moses could not deliver, because the power of the Law stopped short of the fulfillment of the promise. **Only in Christ** can we find light, because the veiled blindness of the heart had been defeated and removed by the finished work of the Cross. And then, only in Spirit fullness can we find more light which then provokes and does not fade away. **These two things released Stephen into fullness** and made him the willing vessel he was to be, as a provoking martyr sacrifice. **He was a son of light**, NOT sat upon with light through absorption, hidden in a cloud or in a tent, **but rather, empowered with the revelation of Christ, and indwelt from within, with Holy Spirit lit fullness outpoured...** the result? A foretaste... The difference between Stephen's witness not being able to deliver the Jews in that day, and Paul's future Romans 11:25... **is the timing**. It wasn't in God's time for the Jews **as a nation to be provoked** at this initial outpouring at Pentecost, and so they extinguished the glory as only they could, because of their unique abiding covenant

relationship... by killing that which would again be a witness against them...**BUT** would yield a piece of fruit that would be forever a thorn in their side, namely Paul. Enter into the text brothers, and feel the great heart dilemma. **That luminous brilliance of unrestrained glory radiating from the torn body, of the willful, loving not his life to the death Stephen, was that which shook and then provoked Paul in his very core... and that effect of fullness was what they could not extinguish... Because it stuck in the mind!** And so in desperation of his own self-existence, that is to say, all that Paul had worked for in a life that attempted law keeping, was found to be wanting by reason of a Spirit-fueled fullness **that he should have possessed as a pupil of Moses par excellence, a “*Hebrew of the Hebrews*”... in other words, He was provoked!** And salvation was to be the result of that witness which pointed Him in the right direction. It is no accident then that Stephen was from a Hellenistic sect of Judaism, that is, a Greek speaking Jew. And therefore excluded by those who thought themselves to be more conservative and therefore more pure, because they were not given to the Hellenistic cultural influences and were distinguished by strict segregation like the majority of Israel, see Acts 6. And therefore, he was considered a bit of an out sider, not really what they thought a Jew should be... that is he was a Jew in name, but not outwardly in their eyes, but was not what they were looking for...which leads us to the second point.

Brothers, the second tool summoned by our Lord for the removal of this ignorant heart clutching blindness is none other than an awakened, Rev. 12 “...*love not their lives to the death...*” rag tag band of radical, dead to self, Christian servant Gentile martyrs. My dear brothers... **These are very full gentiles.** Listen to our text. “...*that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*” Do you see the connection I’m getting at in the first point? Here is the exposition of it in plain language. The blindness of the veil hearted Jewish nation on the last day lifts when the gentile reaches an unmatched Spirit given in an awakening unto fullness, which in turn provokes the Jew out of blindness. Just like the contrast of Stephen and Moses and its effects on Paul, a fit microcosm for this point. Make no mistake about it, Moses has light. But his light cannot provoke, but simply adds burden as it cannot be realized in fullness by fallen and sinful flesh because it finds no lasting vessel in which to remain. But the poured out Spirit, within the believer, will be given to Him in fullness in that day. And so this gentile fullness then must be unlike anything we have yet to see in humanities long and sorrow filled drama, as the surmounting cost of its un-lifted veil holds, a key that unlocks the restraining issue to perhaps the greatest view of Christ, manifested within His global Church, just short of our cooperate glorification on the last

day. And so my mission is simple with you this morning, I will breakdown Rom. 11:25, and pray for light on the fullness therein. The great Apostle Paul says...

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery...”

What is this mystery we must not be ignorant of Roman Christians of the first century, to whom he was originally writing and by extension and application, Gentile Christians of today?

As the Vienna born Jewish author Vicky Baum once wrote, “To be a Jew **is** a destiny.” And what a destiny this is that awaits the natural sons of Abraham, but our quest for the destiny and meaning of this text, Jewish as it is, needs to be explained a bit... and so I wonder if we could get beyond the mere descriptive set of informative adjectives that usually bind our minds and hem us into a mere cursory reading of this passage. I’ve been asking, and am praying that as we look, even now, for us to use new eyes, not of this world, which is to say eyes in and from the Spirit. Taught to us in the discipline of exegesis, line upon line. Because unless we are drawn up by the intrinsic spirit which is woven into the fabric of the written Word and thus granted by it access to its stated vision and pristine clarity, this concept of fullness can never be seen for what it promises, and what it also will then deliver. Because the fact that this Rom.11:25 text is set within a larger context, and therefore doesn’t just exist by itself in a vacuous unawareness of its textual landscape and surroundings says something about the nature and plan of fullness. Because Romans 9-11 gives us perhaps the greatest microcosm of the entirety of the Scripture... but it doesn’t stop there. Because Romans 11:26 is going to bring back Christ, “*As the Deliverer roars out of Zion...*” and Paul having seen under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the destiny of his people, the Jewish nation, cannot help himself, but breaks into overflowing doxology at the end of their journey. “***Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out.***” God then brothers has given us the understanding of this docu-drama destiny, because He is the **future of and for** the natural Jew, found in the awaited words of Rom. 11:27, “***For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.***” And what is one of the primary reasons for giving us His Word... To understand and underscore in ink, on paper, the covenant relationship, preserved for all to witness. And so we’re not looking at mere words, contrived in simple human thoughts and deductive collusions; this my brothers is GOD’S WORD! Given to us by His indwelling Spirit, poured out through His chosen writers. And as such it is **Inspired**, which is to say Spirit breathed, **Inerrant**, which is to say eternally true, **Authoritative**, which is to say Spirit guided and ruled,

and **Sufficient**, which is to say, it gives adequate and necessary light for every challenge that is in our human context. His choice of words to be placed in His eternal Word means **we must conform our hearts and mind**, not change it to fit our context. And so the Word of God is living active and powerful. And it guards its own meaning with a full unending fierce eternal covenanted weight... why? **Because... IT... is full.** Full of the Eternal One, and what IT says will always come to pass. God is present in this text as life and beauty. **Our ignorance of it as such, is what Paul is addressing in this text.** And so what, “mystery-history” are we then not to be ignorant of? Hear Rom. 11:1 *“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!”* This is the entrance point into the mystery...the hinge upon which Paul’s understanding and argument turns in the whole rest of the chapter. Paul says that if you Roman gentiles fail to see the issue of **covenant fidelity and enduring distinction** by the God of the Bible all throughout the OT, because the NT hadn’t been fully written yet ... you’re blind... to at least **this portion** of the mystery. We must be careful here... **My fellow lovers of Israel**... I didn’t say they’re not saved because they don’t see the future of the Jews like we do, because that would be incorrect. Although it is true that there will always be tares among the wheat, it is also true that there will always be disobedient and misguided Christians and therefore wrong doctrines as well. But just because you don’t see the future of the Jew as we do doesn’t make you a malicious anti-Semite. Hear me please, the warning in Rom. 11:17-22 is not a warning against having bad eschatology concerning the future of the natural Jews. No, rather verse 20 clears the picture by presenting the foundation of the warning... *“Because of unbelief they were cut off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.”* Natural Israel’s Unbelief has been the issue all along for Paul. Unbelief which fails to take what is entrusted and walk in its calling, and when rejected, leads to the establishment of self-righteous practices, that’s what he’s arguing against, and therefore gives the warning. Think of unbelief at Sinai, and subsequent wilderness wandering; and the Exiles; the disregard of the warnings of their prophets; and the rejection of their Messiah, just to name a few. There is a vast difference between the evil that would take this passage and use it to bludgeon the natural Jews, with a Replacement Theology that harms **the existence of the Jews**, by subsuming them, and seeking their extinction, and seeing no future for them at all, and therefore disregarding the rest of the chapter. And those ignorant gentile Christians who haven’t the awareness to see through a system they learned because they came to faith in a certain tradition and swallowed it hook line and sinker. Paul is not warning them against the loss of their salvation, because he just told them in Rom. 8 that nothing could separate them from the love of God in Christ. Brothers the gospel is the work of the incarnational Christ... applied to

you in substitution by the Spirit in a giving of faith and regeneration, in **which... all... your... sins, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE are forgiven by one eternal sacrifice! Even bad doctrine...** In one solitary act of exchange, a declaration from God the Father, as He receives the meritorious sinless life of Christ as a substitution, along with His cross of sacrifice, as payment for your life of sin, removes the wrath of God, and He is propitiated. *"He who knew no sin became sin for us..."* Why? And... *"He bore our sins in His own body on the tree."* Why? *"That we **might become the righteousness of God in HIM.**"* But the rest of our doctrine, not just the one we are looking at here today, all of it, **has to be weighed and worked out...** and last time I checked eschatology doesn't determine your standing in Christ, **His offering for you does.** And the very best of us doesn't have it all right, we see through the darkened glass, and we live under the weak and beggarly elements in the weakness of this body of death. **And so here is a bold statement, if you can receive it...**

Replacement Theology exists to make our study of the truth, and our willingness to stand in that truth, and declare that truth, and understand that truth, deeper and wider and fuller than it would be without them in the earth. Hear the word of God. *"For there must be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you."* 1 Cor. 11:19. They exist as a backdrop for the light to stand out against. And so just because God allows other conflicting theological views to exist, doesn't mean He doesn't care... His arm is not short, He allows it for greater purposes of contrast and clarity. He can change them, just as He will the blinded Jews we are studying.

Because these Christians suffer in a type of blindness as well. You have no idea what a gift it is for you to have any understanding on this subject at all. And just to be fair and just so we're clear...**we all have weak spots and shallowness of**

understanding in our theology and practice as well. None of us lives to the fullest extent of what we know, nor do we love the Lord our God, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves 24/7, all the time... **OR You Would Be Provoking The Jews To Jealousy, NOW!** ... So be kind to the blind gentile who doesn't see this, pray for him and work with his understanding, **Just like God does with you when you don't see something...** plant seeds in his understanding, perhaps you may sway him. Because in mercy, he may be among the vessels that will bear this future fullness and be the provoking tool in the hand of our delivering God when he is delivered from his error. Don't be wise in your own opinion and become another sect or splinter group fragmenting the body yet even more. **Sink it deep...** into your theology brothers... 1 Cor. 4:7 *"For who makes you to differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as though you had not received it?"* John 3:27,

“John said, a man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from above.” Paul takes no time here in Rom. 11 to berate the gentile for his lack of understanding, but rather seeks to instruct him into the right way, that is, the life of faith, as God would have Him do, in patience and longsuffering, warning against unbelief, an unbelief that would keep him from becoming fullness. Back on point...And so yes I believe ignorance on this point is blindness, and will lead you to embrace a Replacement Theology **that will cost you reward in the future judgment, and truth here and now concerning natural Israel’s future glory**. No doubt. And I’m on the record as saying I despise Replacement Theology... it’s not a small thing, but it’s not bigger than Christ’s forgiveness and therefore has to be part and parcel of my view as well. Take a deep breath... Now that I’ve made some of you mad... will the rest of you please listen, Focus...Focus. Now if you believe replacement theology, the way I’m thinking may seem like ignorance to many who hear me... But to the natural Jew Paul in Romans 11 it wasn’t. So brothers, give us a patient hearing and let us show you a better way to understand Rom. 11.

Now having said that, I would like to briefly look at some, not all the options that are given by commentators, and then show you why I opt for the one I’m presenting to you today. I have already tipped my hand in my introduction, and so I want more time to flesh it out, and so less will be said here.

1. Some see this *“fullness of the gentiles”* as a reference to the ending of gentile domination over the world... and especially the land of Israel and in particular the great city Jerusalem.
2. Others believe that this is a reference to the last gentile being saved and the full number of them is brought into Christ’s salvation, and thus the full number is being described.
3. And still others see this as a reference to the final act of the Gentile takeover of the Jewish covenantal position, thus finally replacing them for good. They didn’t get it, they lost the Messiah check list and we found it... I do not take this last one to be a good fit for this text because of the phrase that follows it, namely that the Apostle is concerned that the Roman gentile would naturally become, *“...wise in his own opinion...”* if he were to read the text in that way and therefore fail to understand the meaning that lay behind the mystery driving it, namely the imposed blindness that will last until the liberation takes place because of the Gentile fullness.

And so as fetching as 2 of these 3 are, that is numbers 1&2, I do not believe they **are the primary meaning**, but could be a **shared secondary byproduct**. You see

what they seem to lack, is the rest of a Romans 11 understanding. Namely Rom 11:5 *“Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”* Just an end of gentile domination over the Jewish people and land, doesn’t save this remnant... and just because the last gentile convert comes into the kingdom, doesn’t save this remnant. **But if a, “fullness of the gentiles” is given that will provoke the remnant, then they will in turn...turn.** You see I believe the text is conveying something to the gentile mind that is lacking... that is...**covenant understanding.** This didn’t just spring up in the last few years, gentiles... God has been at work in a drama of pathos and plight, election and obscurity for some 4000 years when Paul was writing this. And this understanding of *“...the election of grace...”* spoken of here by the **Jewish Paul to the gentile Church at Rome** is what saves the Jewish people and the land of Israel. But the gentile mind would be ignorant of this history of covenant as he was the, “Johnny come lately”. He wouldn’t have light as to why the Jew was blinded; or why there is a mystery in play; **or still, what his role would then be in the leveraging of this blindness off of the Jewish nation at the appointed future time...** Hint Rom. 12:1. Gentile Church... wake up, there is a mystery at work within the blindness... purposefully hiding this covenant understanding of election. God doesn’t just give it to everyone, though anyone can read Romans 11. Israel’s imposition of inability drives a stake through the throbbing, wounded pulsating issue with joint and marrow distinction. And if you’re blind to that gentile Church... you can’t follow the Romans 9-11 panorama. As Helen Keller once remarked; “The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.” What is the vision that drives this text? A prior commitment to what Paul knew the un-covenant minded, un-mystery-history educated Gentile needed to have made plain to him. The gentile mind might want to think many things about the concept of “mystery,” but it has a specific meaning in this context, which is to say, something has been driving the point being made, and that something is **Sovereign Omniscience!** Gentile Christians need to understand says Paul that for ignorance to be overcome concerning the issue of imposed blindness something of God’s character and way must be understood. Mystery takes us back, it places the pinpoint of inception in the God who purposefully hides. And God does nothing without purpose and Divinely directed intention. Mystery is a concept that is birthed in God and then fulfilled in His orchestrated plan.

And so I’m arguing for a fourth interpretation... One that will cause us to have to probe in descriptive Spirit led, textual driven ways the future Revelation 12 fall of Satan and its effects concerning gentile fullness. In order to do that, I need you to look at the landscape of the book of Romans with me... Let’s begin in Romans 8. A fallen world

groans and grinds, as the apple bitten in Eden still burdens the branch from which it was plucked, and this creation is ever straining, reaching and pulling forward, as it eagerly awaits the restoration of all things in the manifestation of the sons of God. We can have hope of this, and place our faith in this, and stand secure in this... because of the Mighty Christ! Because we know that all things are working together for our good. Why? Because the omniscient God of all eternity foreknew, elected, predestined and conforms us to His image in and through the work of Christ. *“What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* Gentiles... Do you see it? Do you have light? Does the luminescent glow of the rising beam of electing glory and truth yield covenant understanding to you? Romans 8:37–39 should send you there! *“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors **through Him who loved us**. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* There is an eternal Love that will never let gentiles whom Paul is writing to, and Jews who will in time come in, GO. Election is the promise of life in Christ. And that’s just what Romans 9 lays out. Brothers the sovereign high cost of Gods choices, and what they have been to Him in the economy of His world are not a small thing, but has great purpose. But in Romans 9:25–29 those Sovereign choices bring both groups of peoples together in One expectant future hope of purpose. “As He says also in Hosea: *“I will call them My people, **who were not My people**, And her beloved, who was not beloved.”* “And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There they shall be called sons of the living God.” (There’s the **gentiles...**) Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: *“Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, **The remnant will be saved**. For He will finish **the work** and cut it short in righteousness, Because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.”* And as Isaiah said before: *“Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a **seed**, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah.”* (And there is the Jew...) a fledgling seed ready to burst forth in due covenant yielding season. Don’t lose me here...Remember we’re talking landscape and where its taking us...And so in Romans 10 Paul lays out why Israel is where he is as a nation... Romans 10:2–3 says it clearly. *“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. **For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.**”* WHY? Because they didn’t hear Moses correctly in Deut. 30:12-14. Your righteousness is not in the keeping of Law but in the work and person of Christ. You Gentiles need to understand, that the Jews need to

understand the, “*righteousness of faith*” says Paul, a faith that trusts God for your perfect acceptable works. But because they won’t believe in and therefore name the name of Christ as their Messiah... their veiled. **Your rejection of Him has great national consequence and cost, and so says Paul in Rom. 11, “*branches were broken off.*” And as hard as it is for us to hear it... It’s even harder to hear it 2000 years later.** And Paul feels that pain... and sees that darkness as he was himself once under it. And so he says in Romans 10:19–21 “But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: “*I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.*” But Isaiah is very bold and says: “*I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.*” But to Israel he says: “*All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.*” **This is the backdrop and foundation for the fruit of the, “*provoking to jealousy*” deliverance from unbelief... And the provoking is only made possible when the Romans 11:25 “*fullness of the gentiles has come in.*” And so I submit to you...hear me carefully brothers... Fullness in the corporate gentile will only happen when the restrainer is removed in the middle of the last seven years as Revelation 12 depicts. But until then Satan, the Restrainer must be held in check in order to preserve the future context, and so he is allowed a space to occupy. This place of accusation is granted in God’s wise providence, and serves as part of His plan, **lest the blindness be lifted prematurely, and Satan be loosed upon the Church before its time.** Thus the fullness break forth before its due season and the perfume of heaven be prematurely produced. And so there is a great war coming in the heavens, Revelation 12:7–12 says... “*Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out...*” A future casting down of that usurping accuser yields great gentile blessing and I believe fullness unmatched in human history. Listen...You ask yourself whether this angelic warfare is of great substance in the heavens. I submit to you that it controls the events of earth in ways not yet imagined, and only to be found out after the last day.**

Think with me...all the world is full of angelic/demonic presence: Everything from embodying animals, to being a deceptive spirit in the mouth of otherwise trustworthy prophets. They wage wars and dispute over the dead bodies of saints. They control certain regions in the world and have an apparent social or authority structure. They have ability to possess the unregenerate as well as make mankind sick with certain diseases, and in particular, and chiefly, they tempt the saints in all points, often using

studied patterns of behavior and points of knowable, learnable weakness. They are relentless in this pursuit and even attempted this on our Lord personally. They can become as men if need be, and are also able to be ministers in light though evil to the core. They are said to incite riots against the early evangelists, and cloud the minds of men with deception and ignorance. Yet the godly angels are said to be ministering to the Lord in heaven as well as those saved here on earth. They are wiser and more powerful than mankind and yet lower by created order, and will be judged by redeemed mankind. They have a free will in the since that some chose to leave their first estate and follow the rogue dissident Satan in rebellion. And the godly will be with us in eternity worshipping God.

But for all that... In the realm of angels, the concept of truth is all that matters. It empowers the Just and holy angels, and defeats the unholy fallen. For those who are the fallen, his evil role in all of life is to in some way or another to turn the person away from truth, or water it down, or get him to only believe a part of it, and that, only what the fiend force deems fit; "...*whose minds the god of this age has blinded...*" (2. Cor. 2:4). Jesus said that Satan was a "...*liar from the beginning...*" And that's what all these point to, half-truths and distortions of it. The fallen angel is in the final analysis only interested in what C.S. Lewis so keenly puts forth in his demonic handbook manual, The Screwtape Letters. "Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one – The gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turning, without milestones, without signposts." Today I believe we would call this "political correctness".

And so here is my **fourth option** for producing and production of a changed and made ready provoking gentile Church in the earth. Never have such expectant full words been given to us... back to Rev 12, "***Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.***"

What distinguishes this passage from a past Genesis event is the reference to the coming kingdom power of Christ, not fully understood or made know in the time of Adam, but only given as a word of promise, and the casting down of Satan which had not happened before Eden. And so hear it again with fresh ears and eyes; "...*Salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come...*" Genesis was the revealed inception of the plan, Revelation is the fullness in culmination. The deliverance of the kingdom from the final authority of Satan was

secured in the sacrificial, substitutional work of the Cross. Its power though present in Church history in the form of renewal and revival, which never reached global proportions is thus reserved for the completed display at the final presentation and pre-inaugural benefits of those fighting in travail to obtain it at the onslaught of Satan's removal from the heavenly occupation and manifestation in the man of sin. There is something about the curse in the garden on Satan, man and creation that has been in play since then. The willingness of our God to allow a usurping spirit of evil authority to occupy a heavenly role as accuser is a necessary providential act, even after the resurrection and ascension; events that clearly show the defeat of Satan is final, though not completely enforced to its concluding degree. Why? **Because the accuser must needs be cast down at the appointed time!** And not a moment sooner. The "mystery" once divulged in final clarity and the flesh hindering, conscience binding, soul ravishing fullness of, "*Christ in you*" that has been veiled, is cast down in the middle of the final 70th week, which has shrouded and therefore clouded these events and withheld the fullness of gospel power by hindering gospel fullness in knowledge and willingness from mankind, because of the weakness of a sinful self-exhaling, self-righteous spirit within him, will at this appointed time have no more usurping power. There will be a war in heaven and a shout on earth my brothers! Heavenly war means earthly unveiling.

But one thing stands in the way of that final knowledge delivering, kingdom empowering heavenly war... Paul says...

"...Lest you should be wise in your own opinion..."

Paul is concerned about what you believe and think gentiles. And so the question is, "What will replace a correct understanding of the mystery?" A worldly wisdom founded in self exalting opinion and not covenant understanding? NO! What is it that is produced within the heart and mind that causes it to be thrust into a state of being provoked? Replacement Theology?... give me a break! No! The question must be to us gentiles, "Why then is the natural son of Abraham not provoked by the Gentile church of today?" I mean if **we have completely replaced them... bear with my folly here brothers...** "Where's the beef?" Or put another way, what has our **wise opinion of ourselves gained for us** in our witness to the Jew?

Because even in his blindness and hardened heart, the Jew is not fooled nor is he provoked... By an easy believism that paints the second person of the Trinity, the incarnation of God to man, which was manifested in the fullness of the times, the mighty Christ of God, as an impotent limp wristed weak-willed do-gooder who

stands helplessly at the front of our churches on any given Sunday morning pleading with the unrepentant sinner to let Him into His life, as though He God were to be controlled by a creature. And if he does, he'll give him a free iPod and steak dinner for doing so, just say the prayer, sign the card and take the dip, here's your certificate and tie tack, welcome to the kingdom brother... just drop your tithes over there when the plate comes by. **Ask the Apostle Paul** if that was the mighty Christ he encountered on the road to Damascus, when he was knocked to the ground by a glory unimagined and an authority unsurpassed! **Ask John on Patmos** if his falling to the feet of the risen gloriously arrayed king of Heaven, the unsurpassed beautiful majestic Christ as though he were dead, was because he slipped...

He is not fooled nor is he provoked by... A gentile church so fractured and splintered by petty divisions, and ignorant self-serving issues. When the color of the carpet, or the placement of the plants, or use of notes to preach, or wine or grape juice, or the style of music or preaching **doesn't fit US... in all points...I'm out of here!** **We have no spiritual fruit** to be Christ-like toward one another... **Where is the fruit of His Spirit?** Where is the longsuffering, gentleness, patience, temperance, self-control, kindness...or above all, the love for the poor fools across the aisle? Many here don't regularly go to a local assembly, and would never covenant with them in membership, because they have no time for such manmade foolishness... And so our gifts languish and our testimony to the watching world and all Jewry suffers, as we live in isolation and therefore carnality and self-absorption, because we have no life together. We are basically islands unto ourselves. Great is your reward!

He is not fooled nor is he provoked by... The liberal theological movement of the last 400 years that has gutted the very life giving, soul transforming, inerrant, inspired, sufficient Word of God, given to the Jew first, and then the gentile... with its gentile inspired, "Higher Criticism," which seeks to do little more than bring God and His word down to the stature of fallen man and hold Him there until He becomes nothing more than a great moral teacher and a master philanthropist. My Bible says, "*The grass withers the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.*" Impregnated within each utterance of God in the form of a spoken or written Word is the eternally regenerating, renewing, creative, unmatched, all-encompassing power that lay with the One speaking. Carve it up today... IT will carve you up in the end!

He is not fooled nor is he provoked by... a gentile Church growth movement that seeks to adorn the message of salvation in Christ with coffee shops and zip lines, colored light shows, fog machines and smooth PowerPoint presentations. All the while setting in multi-million dollar creature comfort laden facilities and shallow Christ-less

principal driven passionless sermonettes. Musical opulence driven by beat and repetition, shallow in lyric and focus and not eternal in perspective and timeless Godward value.

He is not fooled nor is he provoked by... a faith that lets sexually confused gays and lesbians masquerade as true expositors of the Word of God in the pulpit! And all that in the name of inclusion and post-modern value acceptance. Or a faith that allows women to be pastors in the name of restoring what was lost in the garden? Read it...in plain English... Paul says in 1 Tim. 2:12-14 *"I do not permit a women to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, the woman being deceived, fell into transgression."* You can argue with me all you want ladies, but you can't argue with the facts. God is not recovering equality, because it was never lost. He's restoring created order! The lack of male leadership in the Church is epidemic. Men, it's time to grow up and stop avoiding your God given responsibility, and take up the mantel of authority given you by God and serve His Body putting the needs of others before your selfish own. The woman is to be protected from deception, by the exercise of God entrusted authority by the man...the very thing Adam failed to do concerning the Word of God in the garden. He is not fooled by our lack of male leadership.

He is not fooled nor is he provoked by... a manufactured move of, "Revival" in the Spirit, which is advertised on a sign and floated in a flyers weeks in advance... marketed like a movie and sold in every possible outlet. A myriad of so called revivals that reduces men to barking dogs and uncontrolled laughing fools... One that yields gold in your teeth and lines the pockets of the preachers with sports cars, and Leer jets, hidden retreats and multi-million dollar mansions! Go ahead and wave your hankies and stomp your feet and dance like it's the year of Jubilee, and don't forget to send in your seed! And yet these people couldn't tell you where to find a passage in their Bible or carry on an intelligent discussion about something other than where to buy dog food and diapers... **Where is the Cross poor undiscerning Gentile believer?** **Where is the commitment** to a life of sacrifice and service for the world yet to come? **Where is the saint** of God, who ascends the pulpit, of God and brings down the power of God, in a spiritual encounter between the risen Savior and Saint every Sunday?

He is not fooled nor is he provoked... by our fabricated pale and stale this world version of holiness, concealed in our slick comb-over hair and our suit wearing form and function... nor by our prayer-less lives, or our lifeless passionless witness to the lost. Go ahead and say it, it's in your hearts already, God knows it... We don't care what

happens to the world and especially the Jew, haven't you heard... He's been replaced! And we're saved! We are too busy with endless preoccupation... Sports and entertainment, video games and materialism; "Here is your God O Israel who brought you up out of the Land of Egypt"... These idols rob us of our time with God, family and Church, and really manifests our self-sufficiency and man-centeredness packaged in pretended love for the lost and dying GOING TO HELL. Just pass the plate, someone else can go on my behalf... **He is not fooled...nor is he provoked...** Not when the Jew has as the champions of his Faith, those men we gentiles must look to as a test and backdrop to ours. Men like Abraham the father of the covenant faith. Who left family and lands to search out the Words of promise spoken to Him by a God he scarcely knew... Or what about the sweet psalmist and warrior poet, the great king David, the Father of the Golden Age of Jewish culture. Or in his estimation the greatest of all, Moses! This man sat on a mountain, and in a tent, and visited and wrote the very words of God. To speak a word against him was death or close to it. And lest we forget... Our Christ is Jewish by nation and God incarnate. No dear brothers, NO... dear brothers... The natural Jew is not at all fooled by us, as they have real men of God to look to, not the pretenders we are, and the ones we are following today. The Jew is not fooled dear brothers... and therefore not provoked by our makeshift version of feeble lifeless Christianity.

Slow...He is not fooled... nor is he provoked... though blinded, he can still discern the weakness of the gentile church and sees in it the shallow confusion and heart idolatry which seeks to replace him as the true foundation for **their** own faith. The Church must see in itself the reflection of Israel. (Repeat) Their impotence is an indictment on our lack of life and holiness. It is our lack of true holiness, and therefore our moralistic worldview that is exposed for the idolatry that it is... **Where is the life given by the Spirit that will provoke in another that jealousy to emulation... where is IT?** Only when we can begin to see our lack of true spiritual life and sinfulness as a stumbling block, can we begin to have hope in the future day of corporate renewal.

Pause... Let's then, gentiles, take the sting of our lash and learn from it... I have to keep going... let's probe a bit deeper... let's explore what are the issues constituting Israel's corporate blindness. Our text says...

"...that blindness in part has happened to Israel..."

This is a hard section brothers... Please hear it as it is, not with your own biased heart or skin. You cannot escape the fact that **God has broken off the branches in**

judgment! Did you hear that... **God has done this**, says Rom 11:17. You cannot escape the reason given by the inspired, superintended Apostle Paul, in Rom 11:20, “*unbelief*” of the nation of Israel in the day of Christ and continuing until our own day, you simply can’t escape it. I just drug the Gentiles including myself over the coals for the issues we have to deal with... we do have blood on our hands, but you can’t escape your own unbelief as a nation, not for what the gentile Church has done...as bad as it is, and I know my history well enough to know how bad it is... But the witness of God against the nation of Israel is not just the sinfulness of the lack of credible Gentile witness, **DON’T LOSE ME HERE... the witness against Israel is the unbelief against the VERY WORD OF GOD!** Your own prophets foretold of this coming calamity...and they had not eyes and ears for its Sovereign message. And so a rejection of the written word in the mouth of the prophets, is a rejection of the One behind the announcement...**The Word Himself!** Brothers we all have skin in this. So let’s step back... How terrible it must have been to have been among the Jews of Jesus day. They were slowly feeling the loosening grip of the providence program of Divine drama turning away from them... losing their grip on land, buildings and leadership, all the while thinking they were doing the will of God. But it was just such a stage that set them up for their own judgment. And it was just such a judgment Jesus imposes on them in Matt. 23:37-39. When He cries out these blinding words, like shackles to the eyes and therefore souls of the rejecting nation. “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*” Oddly enough the inception of this indictment starts with the word... “See”? **SEE... SEE... O blind covenant nation!** See the grimaced, red tear welled eyes, and trembling muffled pleading tone of rejection in the Messiah who was to be your eyes. **SEE... SEE...** The hammer and stake in your hands as we must see it in ours, **WE ARE ALL GUILTY! SEE... SEE...** the long exodus from Titus the great destroyer of Jerusalem in 70AD to the slave blocks of the nations. **SEE... SEE...** the pogroms and injustice, the rejection and the repeated unending relocations, the rapes and the tortures, the cartoons and the burnings, the broken glass and endless lines of migrants, the stifling and the bowed down back. **SEE... Oh can you SEE...the meaning behind the yellow stars on the arms, and the wilting of sagging numbed flesh through the barbed wire of history, the inability to weep, and the eruption of thick black smoke from the fires... SEE IT... Your house says your Lord and Messiah is left to you desolate... “Blindness in part**

has happened to Israel"... **SEE it and wail you gentile and Jew.** This Messiah-man who foretells your national future is the offended beam in your corporate eye. He will not relent, His Word is true and final. He decides your destiny... **if you can see it.** And so I believe that this is, "**in part**" the hardening or blinding spoken of in Rom. 11:25. It seems that this parallels what Paul says in Romans 11:8-10 "Just as it is written: ***"God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day."*** And David says: ***"Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always."***

Natural Israel have become a harlot-trafficker...of the most sorted kind, looking for love and acceptance... and Messiahs since this rejection. They are trading in souls and self-righteousness by tradition and rejection. **But she's looking... you can hear it** in the longing for prayer on the Temple mount... **You can see it** in the call for the rebuilding of the Temple itself... but she is blind and can't see her need, and so she bustles about from man to man... looking for what she does not know, because the eyes of her heart are blinded by the rejected One.

She's the great harlot robed in the dazzling scarlet thread,
Adorned with jewels and a crown on your head,
Striding the many, and riding the ages,
Killing the prophets and silencing the Sages.
So full and brash and splash with your drink.
In and out of shadows just working the beat.
But the traffics getting rough, and the shadows stretching long,
And you're running out of corners, and you tired of this song.
It's like the lamp lit night of the darkened anywhere street,
But you're still standing... and waiting for someone to meet.
Someone new... "Hi yea, how ya doing?"
"Are you here for a chat, or are other things brewing?"
But the nights have been long, and this life's getting to ya.

And the years so cruel and the jokes tare through ya... but
You've got honey and the world's got money
And you're far from your home girl in your own land of plenty
And though you're settled and have the greatest of beauty
Your friends are few and you're always on duty
Next, next, could you hold me just once more?
And help me to find the key to this revolving sealed door?
But there's no rest for the longing, the one deep inside,
That waits for the harlot to be transformed into a bride.....
Which leads us to our last consideration... Paul says,

“...until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”

Divine wisdom and electing prerogative are on display in this one little Greek preposition... *“Until.”* AND in the word, “until” we see the context of the whole Pauline argument... If as I suggested Paul's entrance into this mystery is the opening question of Rom. 11:1, *“...Has God cast away His people?”* His exit is Rom. 11:15, *“For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, **what will their acceptance be but life from the dead.**”*

You remember, I started by saying that Gentile fullness has a purpose. Here is the sweet vintage from that engrafted crushed vine. The savory brimming swell of sweet and rich uncontained fullness reaches its peak in this pregnant statement. **Fullness is called forth like the glory of visiting royalty.** The one coming is summoning the call to exalt in his fame from the one who was just living in the ordinary way under his distant rule but a moment ago. Christ is the miracle formed in us at the new birth, and so Christ is also the fullness in the coming pressed experience which births this fullness. Hear me sweet brothers... God in fighting against Satan, unleashes the suffering of Christ through His Church... and we partake of His cross in these broken hearted sorrows which then are released through our joy in the outcome on the other side of the great time of persecution we are about to undergo. Just like our Lord, *“...who for the Joy set before Him endured the cross...”* And His disciples, who were *“...Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”* We are made willing to do this because of the fullness that awakens us. But first pressure is

allowed to be exerted on the Church in the form of Antichrist's wrath and the difficult circumstances of his dark ignorant reign... but, like the dawning ray of a new morning, mounting to fullness in the transit of its rise, **our merciful God will not leave us without power.** But His power is unlike our human power... *"for he takes no pleasure in the legs of a man"* that is, He has no pleasure in the strength of human sufficiency, and so hear Paul's sweet comforting words to the Corinthians... *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, **yet not crushed**; we are perplexed, **but not in despair**; persecuted, **but not forsaken**; struck down, **but not destroyed**, always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, **that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.** For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, **that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.** So then death is working in us, but life in you."* 2 Cor. 4:8-12. This then is to be our pre-planned experience tailored for us by our Lord. In this time of tribulation we experience the cross as Satan is against us. Brothers I submit to you that when the light of this world is dim and diminishing, the fullness of the Gentiles will light up the night as a fireworks display of unequaled proportion. Quote: "The great quality of a miracle is **not in its being an unexpected**, unbelievable event in which the presence of the holy bursts forth, but in its happening to human beings who are profoundly astonished at such an outburst." A. J. Heschel. I think Heschel has it right... are we to be astonished by the in-breaking of the last days manifestation of, *"Christ in you..."* as though a God who's fame and renown have so clearly been foretold by every Prophet since the beginning could be contained from this end-time declaration? This final "outburst" of Sublime presence fits us for our calling and destiny as the One who in Romans 8:29, *"foreknew us"* in eternity past, and now, *"conforms us"* for eternal purposes yet unknown in the image of Christ. Let us then probe the effects of this, "fullness"... I have only certain things with which to compare this fullness. God in His mercy has been pleased to give His Church a foretaste of such fullness in small and intermittent glimpses. It is only a small view of our future middle of the week glory in miniature...but nevertheless a smidgen and foretaste of our coming glorification. **John Flavel** gives a remarkable instance of a man caught up in a vision of God and remarks, "Such was the intenseness of his mind, such ravishing tastes of heavenly joys, and such his full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost sight and sense of this world, and the concerns thereof; and for some hours knew not where he was, nor what he was about... The same blessed frame was preserved all that night, and in a lower degree, the great part of the next day; the night passed without one wink of sleep; and yet he declares he never had a sweeter nights rest in all his life. The joy of the Lord

overflowed him, and he seemed to be an inhabitant of another world.” Imagine with me brothers the ravishing fullness of a global gentile Church not just given to this since of heavenly joyful assurance of infused eternal perspective for a few days or even weeks...but for 31/2 years! “...*they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony and they loved not their lives to the death.*” That is, “they seemed to be an inhabitant of another world.” What do they do? “... *they overcame him...*” This is often overlooked in our discussions, as we tend to focus on only what power Satan within AC is **employing, and not the power of Satan’s Creator!** That is, the shining expression of fullness in the unveiled face of the vast army of regenerate Stephen martyrs, plundering the plan of Satan for world domination, and serves and saves the Jew for his final wilderness encounter with his Lord at the glorious second coming. And so the question for us is, how will this come about? Listen to one of my trusted and favorite mighty men of God... *Jonathan Edwards*: “We are taught also by this happy event, how easy it will be for our blessed Lord to make a full accomplishment of all his predictions concerning his kingdom, and to spread his dominion from sea to sea, through all the nations of the earth. We see how easy it is for him with one turn of his hand, with one word of his mouth, to awaken whole countries of stupid and sleeping sinners, and kindle divine life in their souls. The heavenly influence shall run from door to door, filling the hearts and lips of every inhabitant with importunate inquiries, ‘*What shall we do to be saved? ‘And how shall we escape the wrath to come?’*’ And the name of Christ the Saviour shall diffuse itself like a rich and vital perfume to multitudes that were ready to sink and perish under the painful sense of their own guilt and danger. Salvation shall spread through all the tribes and ranks of mankind, as the lightning from heaven in a few moments would communicate a living flame through ten thousand lamps and torches placed in a proper situation and neighbourhood. But the pleasure of this agreeable hint bears the mind away from our theme.”

Brothers take courage and heart! **Our view of God is too small...** he can do in a moment what we couldn’t do in a history of lifetimes... So I ask you, what will provoke the natural Jew to jealousy for the sweet preparation of the soon coming Christ... Like the suns ray splashing in fullness upon the moon, she will awaken to the need for Jesus Christ to be her deliverer. When they see the embodiment of a crushed and wounded, bleeding and torn, pierced and emptied, fully yielded, arms out-stretched, Spirit filled army called the Body of Christ, pointing her to the straight gate. One that resemble that Jew of Jews, Jesus the Christ, fully God and fully man, He will lift the blindness and they will be provoked... How? This gentile army **will be** Made willing, Made white, Made beautiful, and Made ready, fashioned and prepared for Ester’s, “*such a time as this*”. The earthly and intermittent Haman’s of the coming tribulation **will ignite the raw passion of discipleship in a Spirit prepared Church! And so Awake! Awake I say! And Rise up O man of God and shake off the garments tainted by**

the apathetic besetting sins of cold dead and lifeless orthodoxy or the shallow ignorance of the confused money-loving lawless! Awake sweet brothers and rend your hearts and not your garments! Yearn and yield for the things promised in the birth pangs of preparation. Give no rest to your eyes, no quenching of your appetite from the deliverance from the womb of prophetic vision and insight. Contract and push, strain in spirit filled travail to bring this fullness of spirit into present reality. Cry out with fresh lungs! Scream the new life with every fiber of your being, just as the newborn baby does at the gasp of new found air, in its separation to that which is of another world... And embrace the Christ exalting, God entranced vision of your calling. Let's pray...