

## Nations, Gentiles, Heathen & the Ephesians

What correlation is there between the heathen & recipients of Paul's Ephesians' epistle? Unfortunately, Ephesians is often read as a generic epistle to which I've actually witnessed Ephesians 2:8-10 applied to O.T. saints... "For by grace are YE saved THROUGH FAITH; and that not of YOURSELVES: *it is* the gift of God: **9** NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created IN CHRIST JESUS unto GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." **Ephesians 2:8-10**. There's absolutely nothing here applicable to O.T. justification! In fact, exactly the opposite! Noah 'found' grace in site of the LORD because he was just; justification was 'by' faith; works was a principle of 'by' faith justification, in particular under law and no O.T. saint was 'in Christ'.

Depending on the context in the O.T., the words 'Gentile', 'nations' and 'heathen' are used interchangeably as they can be translated from the same Hebrew word (גוֹי, go'-ee). We are & will remain dependent on the KJB translators to convey the meaning of each within context! The words 'Gentiles' and 'nations' first show up in the same verse in Genesis 10:5, during introduction of the generations of Noah after the flood.

Genesis 10:1 Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood.

Genesis 10:5 By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

The concept behind the usage of the words Gentiles and nations is pretty simple as explained within the verse itself.

...divided in their lands

...every one after his tongue

...after their families

Simply, nations are identified according to their borders, languages and decedents.

The words 'Gentiles', 'heathen' and 'nations', are found a total of ten (10) times in the book of Galatians and similar to that in the O.T., all three of these terms are translated from the same Greek word; ἔθνος, éthnos, eth'-nos. Again, trusting the KJB translation & relying on word by word comparison, CONTEXT comes into play!

A. Gentiles - seven (7) times (**Ga 2:2, 8, 12, 14-15; 3:14**); B. heathen - three (3) times (**Ga 1:16; 2:9; 3:8**);

C. nations - one (1) time (**Ga 3:8**).

In establishing the Mosaic Covenant, The LORD gave very specific warnings to the newly formatted nation of Israel towards a particular practice among the nations ... "And God spake all these words, saying, 2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;" **Exodus 20:1-5**

...Thou shalt have no other gods before me

...Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them

**Deuteronomy 4:26-28** I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. 27 And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. 28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

...the LORD shall scatter you AMONG THE NATIONS

...ye shall be left few in number AMONG THE HEATHEN

The heathen is depicted very clearly in the LORD's warning to the nation of Israel. We'll parallel God's warning with that of Paul's description of same group.

**Romans 1:18-25** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; **19** Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. **20** For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: **21** Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. **22** Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, **23** And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. **24** Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: **25** Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

...when they knew God, they glorified him not as God

...changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things

...Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator

KJB Definition: 'heathen' – Those, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, that change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

The scriptures, foreseeing the day in which God would one day justify the HEATHEN 'through faith', preached the gospel (good news) to Abraham saying in him shall all nations be blessed (**Cp. Gal 3:8-9 w/Gen 12:1-3 & Gen 15:1-6**). What wasn't prophesied, & actually hid in God, was that this outreach would be conducted outside of the Israel's directive under the Twelve, via an apostle dedicated to Gentiles (**Rom 11:25; Rom 16:25-26; Eph 3:1-21**)!

What is often missed in Bible study is the progression Paul followed in reaching what truly the scriptures regard as the 'heathen' ... "Delivering thee from the People, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I

send thee, **18** To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” **Acts 26:17-18**

...Delivering thee from the People (Jew/Israel)

...and *from* the Gentiles (those who feared God)

...unto WHOM now I send thee, To open THEIR eyes (the heathen; “...they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the HEATHEN, and they unto the circumcision. **Gal 2:9.**)

...and inheritance AMONG THEM which are sanctified BY FAITH that is IN ME

The pious Jew & God-fearing Gentile were first in Paul’s crosshairs (**Acts 13:16-46**) as he ministered in & around the synagogues from Acts 13 - Acts 19, that included a synagogue at Ephesus (**Acts 19:8**).

Paul bumped into a 3<sup>rd</sup> classification of people in Acts 17 where we read... “Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. **18** Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.” **Acts 17:17-18**

...with the A. Jews; B. devout persons; C. in the market daily with THEM that MET WITH HIM

Though our focus is on the Ephesians, in Acts 17 we find Paul’s famous speech, from Mar’s hill ‘TO THE UNKNOWN GOD’, where we don’t find arguments Paul used in proving Christ when in the synagogues! Who is Abraham?

In Acts 19, Paul moves AWAY from the synagogues... “...he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the SCHOOL OF ONE TYRANNUS. **Acts 19:9** For 2 years Paul ministered and his influence was throughout ALL ASIA within a culture dedicated to the worship of... “Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone AT EPHESUS, but almost throughout ALL ASIA, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: **27** So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom ALL ASIA and the WORLD WORSHIPPETH.” **Acts 19:26-27**

Here’s what’s essential in understanding when reading Ephesians... The Abrahamic Covenant covenanted for a seed & land for that seed. The Mosaic Covenant, which discriminated AGAINST the HEATHEN, covenanted for individual & national righteousness for that seed to remain in the covenanted land. Israel is NOW in a state of blindness IN PART (**Rom 11:25**) and God is saving the HEATHEN outside of Israel’s influence!

It is my conviction that Ephesians is addressed to converted non-covenanted Gentiles (heathen) that were directly or, as likely, indirectly saved through Paul’s ministry after Acts 19. His epistle is all about HOW & WHY (Eph 1:9-23) the heathen got from ‘THERE’ to ‘HERE’ by the grace of God through Paul’s ministry... “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for YOU GENTILES, **2** IF YE HAVE HEARD OF the DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD which is given ME to YOU-WARD:” **Ephesians 3:1-2**

**Ephesians 2:11-13** “Wherefore remember, that YE *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; **12** That at that time YE were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: **13** But now in Christ Jesus YE who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

**Ephesians 2:18-22** For through him WE BOTH have access by one Spirit unto the Father. **19** Now therefore YE are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; **20** And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; **21** In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: **22** In whom YE also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

...through him WE BOTH have access by one Spirit unto the Father

...In whom YE ALSO are BUILDLED TOGETHER for AN HABITATION OF GOD through THE SPIRIT

Though fine-tuned over past 40+ years, my persuasion has strayed very little regarding the start of the church. I have taught that the church, the body of Christ, started with the Twelve keeping in mind we MUST discern between hopes & callings and distinguish between the MEN & METHOD in which Christ has used to BUILD & FRAME it! There were those ‘in Christ’ before Paul (Rom 16:7) and yet... “For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of MY WAYS which be IN CHRIST, as I TEACH every where IN EVERY CHURCH.” **1 Corinthians 4:17** Remember the Christian Jews at Jerusalem... “...and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many THOUSANDS of JEWS there are WHICH BELIEVE; and THEY are ALL ZEALOUS OF THE LAW:

**Acts 21:20**

The ‘Statement Of Faith’ left behind for these converted non-covenanted Gentiles, addressed in Ephesians, is found in 4:1-6... “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech YOU that YE walk worthy of the vocation wherewith YE are called, **2** With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; **3** Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** *There is* ONE BODY, and ONE SPIRIT, even as ye are called in ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING; **5** ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM, **6** ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, who *is* ABOVE ALL, and THROUGH ALL, and IN YOU ALL.” **Ephesians 4:1-6**

...and in YOU all!!!!

Want to know doctrinal details concerning a time period in which this household was/is being put together? Look at what’s written to who DURING or FOR that time period.