

The background of the image is a close-up, slightly blurred view of two flags. On the left, the stars and stripes of the United States flag are visible. On the right, the white, red, and blue stripes of the Union Jack are visible. The flags are draped and overlap each other, creating a sense of depth and texture. The colors are vibrant, with the red and white stripes being particularly prominent.

The
**United States
and Britain**
in Bible Prophecy

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The **United States and Britain** in Bible Prophecy

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Two Nations That Changed the World

"Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing... To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?" (Isaiah 40:15, 18).

It's an amazing story—the unprecedented rise of English-speaking people to their dominant positions of power and influence over the modern world.

History shows that their rise to greatness began in the turmoil of the Protestant Reformation. Having broken from Rome and faced with the combined hostility of both the continental church and imperial Spain, then the most powerful nation in the world, England began to look beyond the seas for her security and trade.

Explorers were sent throughout the world during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). This led to the establishment of colonies that later developed into the United States of America and the nations of the British Commonwealth.

Historians have called these countries "revolutionary empires." They were not despotic tyrannies as were other countries or earlier empires in which everyone was subject to domineering autocrats.

Each colony had its own parliament or house of assembly to which voters sent elected representatives. People could own land, practice their religion and even take their government to court, while newspapers were free to criticize the authorities. Books were freely published. Innovative ideas flourished in what became the most politically stable nations in modern history.



London's famous Big Ben and New York's Statue of Liberty are apt symbols of the power of Britain and the United States and their great contributions to civilization.

These new ideas led to the gradual formation of a great company of nations, the British Empire and Commonwealth, and the world's most successful republic, the United States of America.

Why has history been so benevolent and economically generous to Britain and the United States? Why have they been blessed so favorably over the nations that preceded them in history? The answer lies in the understanding and fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

Surprising as it may sound, both were destined according to Bible prophecy to become superpowers. One was to precede the other to world-power status. Both would dominate international affairs in their

Is it logical to believe that God, in revealing the events that would lead to the return of the Messiah in the last days, would simply overlook the United States and British Empire?

own time. They would even be called upon to save other nations from the forces of despotism. Above all, they would make possible democratic and religious freedoms for the English-speaking nations.

In two world wars the British Commonwealth and the United States saved virtually the entire civilized world from powers intent on world domination. Without them our world would be entirely different in many ways.

The climate that encouraged freedom of expression led to the Industrial Revolution, which changed the world. In the century between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the beginning of World War I (1815-1914), British capital and expertise developed the economies of her colonies (one quarter of the world's peoples) and contributed to the development of the fledgling United States and the newly independent nations of South America. After World War II America's economic prosperity and generosity—through the Marshall Plan—got Europe and Japan moving again.

Today the decline of Britain and America is leaving a vacuum around the globe. Already the dissolution of the British Empire has brought to the surface ethnic conflicts long held in check under colonialism. Wars in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and the Pacific are the direct result of decolonization and have made the world more complex and unstable.

American power may seem to be successfully dealing with these problems. But the international standing of the United States itself is in decline. Long in the vanguard of progress, Britain and the United States are increasingly faced with complex and seemingly insoluble

dilemmas at home and abroad. Meanwhile, other powers, in the East and West, flex their muscles, preparing to challenge America's superpower status.

For more than 400 years England and the nations spawned by her have played a crucial role in the world. Together, Britain and the United States have dominated the world scene for two centuries during a time when crucial biblical prophecies concerning the time of the end are being fulfilled before our eyes.

Now we come to some vital questions. Why are economic blessings—and democratic ideals—so evident in the English-speaking nations? Who are the British and American peoples? How do these two great powers—the United States and the nations comprising most of the former British Empire—fit into Bible prophecy?

Are the British and American peoples ignored in the pages of your Bible while less-powerful nations are mentioned specifically and often? Is it logical to believe that God, in revealing the events that would lead to the return of the Messiah in the last days, would simply overlook the United States and British Empire?

Or is it possible that most people, including many students of the Bible, have simply failed to understand the prophecies that accurately predicted the rise to greatness of these nations and what will happen to them in the end time?

Reading through the pages of this publication will take you on an incredible journey through ancient and modern history. You will meet peoples you may never have heard of and visit lands you have not seen. This knowledge is a vital key to understanding our world and age.

This journey will also remind you that the great God, to whom “the nations are as a drop in a bucket” and “as the small dust on the scales” (Isaiah 40:15), is *always* faithful to His promises.

God's Commitment to Abraham and His Descendants

"... In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

To understand some of the Bible's most amazing and inspiring prophecies, we must embark on a study that begins 4,000 years ago—when God began working with a man called Abraham. Abraham was a remarkable figure. God made astounding promises to him that continue to affect not only his descendants but the whole world.

The story of his offspring is remarkable too. It covers much of what we know as the Old Testament. This is a story filled with great themes—the rise and fall not only of great men and women but of kingdoms and empires.

The story of Abraham's descendants has its share of twists and turns and ups and downs and more than a few mysteries.

The books of the Old Testament describe Abraham's offspring growing into a mighty nation—the Israelite kingdom—and entering into a special covenant relationship with God. Comprised of 12 tribes, or family groups, the nation gained prominence for a time.

Yet before long the Israelites divided into two competing kingdoms. When the larger of the two, which retained the name Israel (comprised of 10 of the 12 tribes), rejected its partnership with God, it set in motion one of history's greatest mysteries when its people were forcibly exiled from their ancient homeland.

The smaller, southern kingdom of Judah—comprised of the two remaining tribes and remnants of another—failed to learn the lesson of its northern kinsmen. Its citizens likewise rejected God and were taken into captivity. For the most part, however, they retained their identity and have remained visible through history as a small and often persecuted race, the Jewish people.

But what happened to the 10 tribes of Israel whose enemies forcibly removed them from their land? The Assyrian Empire captured and exiled them from their Middle Eastern homeland in the eighth century B.C. But standard history books make no mention of them today. The world remembers them only as the *lost 10 tribes of Israel*.

God, however, had entered into a covenant—a *divine commitment*—

with *all 12* of the tribes. He had promised they would *always* be His people and He would *always* be their God. Can we count on Him to keep His word? How is that possible if the lost 10 tribes died out, as many assume?

To add to the puzzle, Bible prophecy repeatedly tells us that these supposedly *lost* Israelites are destined to reappear on the world scene in a prominent role immediately after Jesus' return—after their rescue from a "time of trouble" that could dwarf their previous suffering. The prophets of old even speak of their restoration after that time of trouble to *their original homeland* under the rule of the Messiah.



Scenes from an elegant inlaid box excavated in Ur in present-day Iraq depict daily life in the time of Abraham.

Notice this promise Jesus made to His apostles: "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, *judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Matthew 19:28, New International Version, emphasis added throughout).

Did Jesus mean what He said? If these descendants of Israel are destined to play a future role that God has prophesied for the world, where are they now? How can we identify them among the peoples of the world today? And why is this knowledge so important to us?

As we proceed with this eye-opening study, you will learn just how much God is involved in shaping crucial aspects of our world. You cannot afford to be ignorant of this incredible knowledge.

If this information about the lost tribes were simply of historical and archaeological value, then it might indeed be of interest only to those who are fascinated with history. But it is far more important than that.

It is a *master key* for understanding all biblical prophecy. It explains why so many prophecies speak of a coming restoration of *all of the tribes of Israel* as one reunited kingdom and why those prophecies are so prominent in the pages of the Holy Scriptures.

By understanding this incredible story, you can learn a lot about what

God expects of all who would serve Him. May God grant you the spiritual insight to understand this amazing story and heed the lessons you are about to discover.

A story of relationships and agreements

Our story begins with a series of remarkable promises God gave to a man named Abram thousands of years ago.

“Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go

What Is a Biblical Covenant?

In the Old Testament the word *covenant* comes from the Hebrew *berit*. It means “covenant; league; confederacy.” This word is most probably derived from an Akkadian root meaning ‘to fetter’; it has parallels in Hittite, Egyptian, Assyrian, and Aramaic. *Berit* is used over 280 times and in all parts of the Old Testament” (W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 1985, “Covenant”).

God’s covenants contain two especially important components: *terms* and *duration*. Although humans may reach covenants or other agreements through their own devices, God’s covenants with people are usually *unilateral*. He alone determines the terms and conditions; humans choose whether to accept them.

For example, after God clearly defined the aspects of the covenant He was making with the nation of Israel, including the blessings for honoring it and the consequences for ignoring it (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28-30), both parties—God and the people of Israel—accepted it.

Through this process God and Israel entered into a covenant *relationship*, a binding commitment to honor and fulfill their respective roles.

A second important concept for us to understand about God’s covenant with Israel is its continuing relevance to our day. In reaffirming the covenant with the generation of Israelites who were poised to enter the

Promised Land, Moses explained that they were doing this “that [God] may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I make this covenant and this oath, *not with you alone*, but with him who stands here with us today before the LORD our God, as well as *with him who is not here with us today*” (Deuteronomy 29:13-15). The covenant clearly applied to Israel’s *descendants* as well.

Understanding the continuing nature of the covenant, King David, on the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem, wrote: “Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works! . . . He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth. Remember His covenant always, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an *everlasting* covenant” (1 Chronicles 16:8-9, 14-17).

Covenants are simply binding agreements between two or more parties. God Himself designed the covenant He made with Abraham and his descendants. When God makes a covenant, He will always perform what He has bound Himself to do.

to the land I will show you,” God told Abram. “I will make you into a *great nation* and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and *you will be a blessing*. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and *all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*” (Genesis 12:1-3, NIV).

As we will learn in this book, God is always faithful in His promises. Preparation for His relationship with ancient Israel began centuries before its people became a nation. He initiated His plans for Israel as a group of tribes—or extended families—when He established a relationship with Abram. Later He changed the name of Abram, meaning “exalted father,” to *Abraham*, meaning “father of a multitude” (Genesis 17:5).

Notice again God’s promise to him: “I will make you a *great nation*; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (Genesis 12:3).

What a fantastic commitment! With these promises God set in motion an awesome design destined to benefit “all the families of the earth” when they are fulfilled. The history and prophecies of this nation, springing from Abraham, are important not only for its own people but for the people of all nations.

God later passed these promises on to Abraham’s son Isaac, his grandson Jacob and then to Jacob’s 12 sons—from whom came the 12 tribes of Israel. God provided succeeding generations more details about His purpose for Israel and how He intended to fulfill His grand design for them.

This commitment by mankind’s Creator is the thread that links the various parts of the Scriptures together. It enhances the meaning and gives structure to the Bible. Even the mission of Christ is a continuation of this promise.

Almost 800 years after Israel disappeared as a nation, the apostle Paul described gentiles (non-Israelites) who are “without Christ” as “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and *strangers from the covenants of promise*, having *no hope* and *without God in the world*” (Ephesians 2:12).

That’s strong language, but it underscores the importance of God’s commitment to Abraham and that Paul recognized that Israel, including the lost 10 tribes, continued to exist. If Paul had been talking only about the Jews, the tribes comprising the southern kingdom, he would have spoken of Judah, not Israel (see “Are All Israelites Jews?,” page 50).

Paul then clarifies His meaning. “In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to

his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and *sharers in the promise* in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:5-6, New Revised Standard Version).

How can all peoples share in the promises God made to Abraham through Jesus? Paul explains, “And if you are Christ’s, then *you are Abraham’s seed*, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

This means that God must graft all who become His servants into

God’s promise to Abraham was not limited to a small and ancient people in the Middle East. It extends far into the future, and it is not limited by national boundaries. God designed this promise to bring blessings to all nations.

the family of Abraham, and God has *bound Himself* by a series of covenants to accomplish this (Romans 11:13-27). (See “What Is a Biblical Covenant?,” page 8).

God’s promise to Abraham was not limited to a small and ancient people in the Middle East. It extends far into the future, and it is not limited by national boundaries. From the beginning, God designed this promise to bring blessings to *all nations*. That is His purpose. That is what He will accomplish.

Why God selected Abraham

Why did God choose Abraham to be His servant and, through him, bring ancient Israel into existence as a nation? What did God have in mind, and why did He call Abraham into His service at that particular time in history?

After the Flood in the days of Noah, the earth’s inhabitants once again began to turn their back on God. By Abraham’s time all peoples had again grown corrupt.

God then set in motion a major aspect of His plan to offer salvation to mankind. Selecting Abraham was a crucial step in God’s long-term plan to turn all nations back to Him. The remainder of the Bible is woven around His plan to reconcile all humanity to Himself.

You may remember that shortly before the Flood “God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth’” (Genesis 6:12-13, NIV). God spared

only Noah and his wife and their three sons and their sons’ wives.

Then, shortly after the Flood, when humanity again began to oppose the ways of God, the Tower of Babel became the symbol of their rebellion (Genesis 11:1-9). In the context of this rebellion, and the founding of the city-state system of human governance accompanying it, God initiated a new phase in His plan to lead all nations to worship Him. He decided to select *one faithful man* and develop his descendants into a group of influential nations chosen for the explicit purpose of *teaching* and *illustrating* His values and way of life.

A part of that plan involves God’s desire that all nations recognize the stark difference between these two conflicting ways of life. He wants every person to learn that His ways alone can consistently bring true and lasting blessings to all people.

Chosen for service

God created all peoples on earth “from one blood” (Acts 17:26). The story of the Israelites is the story of a single family the Creator God chose for His service out of all the earth’s peoples.

How God Shaped Israel’s Future

Many people are familiar with the story of God miraculously freeing the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage and making them into a nation. He performed many other miracles to accomplish this. Not so familiar, however, are other miracles demonstrating that God personally oversaw the fulfillment of the promises He had made to Abraham.

The miraculous births of Isaac and Jacob, Abraham’s son and grandson, also are important milestones. It was through them that God gave the 12 tribes of Israel the promises He made to Abraham.

By these miracles God demonstrated that the nation of Israel could never have come into existence without His intervention.

Consider the birth of Abraham’s son Isaac. Abraham’s wife, Sarah, remained childless through decades of their marriage. Yet God intervened and miraculously gave Abraham and Sarah a son when she was well beyond the normal childbearing age.

Later Isaac, 20 years after he and his wife,

Rebekah, married, also had no children. Finally, when Isaac was about 60, he prayed for his barren wife. Rebekah miraculously conceived and gave birth to twins, Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25:21, 26).

What important lesson can we glean from these miracles? God showed the descendants of Abraham they could succeed in the calling and mission He gave them only if they relied on divine help. That is a hard lesson for human beings to learn. That difficult lesson is written in the successes and tragedies of the people of Israel.

The writers of the Bible have already recorded much of it so all peoples can learn from Israel’s example. From Abraham God miraculously formed a nation to illustrate to every other nation the benefits that come from obeying Him and the tragedies that come from disobeying Him. Israel has been an example of both. Its part in God’s great plan is far from finished. Israel’s finest hour still lies ahead.

Although the Israelites were a chosen people, in no way were they to be considered a *superior* people—either in antiquity or now. The apostle Peter later explained that “in every nation *anyone who fears [God] and does what is right* is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34-35, New Revised Standard Version). This has always been true.

Some may assume God chose to work with Abraham and his descendants because they were in some way greater or innately better than other people. That simply wasn't the case. God deliberately chose to work with a small group of people who had no international prominence.

Notice what God said to ancient Israel: “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, *for you were the least of all peoples*; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers ... Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deuteronomy 7:7-9; compare 1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

God chose Abraham for a particular job. But He also tested Abraham to see if he would be faithful to Him. Abraham passed those tests. God then began using him because he *believed and trusted* his Creator. “For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’” (Romans 4:3; compare Genesis 15:6).

God forged ancient Israel, under His careful guidance, from 12 related tribes, or extended families, whose ancestors were Abraham, his son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob.

Abraham's extended family grew into an even greater multitude, the descendants of the 12 sons of Jacob. God made them a nation and entered into a covenant relationship with them. Collectively they became known as “Israel,” “the sons of Israel” or “the children of Israel.”

Israel was another name for Jacob. When God began to work directly with Jacob He named him Israel, meaning “one who prevails with God” or “a prince with God” (Genesis 32:24-30).

Israel's descendants were also to be known as “the seed of Abraham,”

“the House of Isaac,” “the House of Jacob” or simply “Jacob”—and by their individual tribal names of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Benjamin and Joseph.

The patriarch Jacob later adopted Ephraim and Manasseh, his grandsons through his son Joseph, as his own sons in regard to his inheritance. As a result, the nation of Israel has historically been said to consist of either 12 or 13 tribes, depending on whether the descendants of Joseph are counted as one tribe (Joseph) or as two (Ephraim and Manasseh).

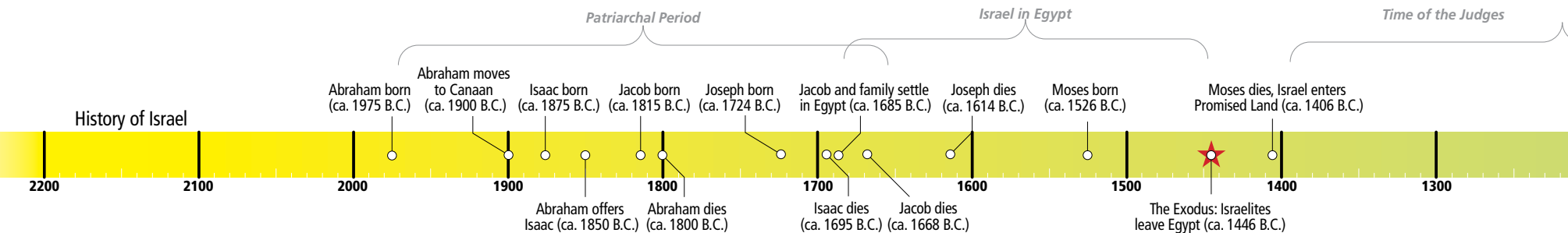
Promises of historic importance

As God worked with Abraham He expanded the series of covenant commitments between them. These commitments were based on the most important and far-reaching series of promises and prophecies ever delivered by God to a human being. The later prophets of Israel, Jesus' apostles and Jesus Himself all regarded these promises as the foundation of their work (Acts 3:13, 25).

Again notice what God told the patriarch Abraham: “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and *you shall be a blessing*. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you *all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (Genesis 12:2-3; also note Genesis 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).

The most important blessing ever to be made available to all nations through Abraham's “seed,” we later learn from the apostles, is the blessing of eternal life through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:25-26; Galatians 3:7-8, 16, 29). Through His mother, Mary, Jesus was born a Jew, of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of Abraham (Hebrews 7:14). His sacrifice opens the door to the people of all nations to enjoy a relationship with the God of Abraham.

When people of any race or background enter into a covenant relationship with Christ, they, too, become Abraham's seed. As Paul wrote in Galatians 3:28-29: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in



Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Thus, from the beginning of God's interaction with Abraham, it becomes increasingly clear that God's objective is to make salvation available to all. The remainder of the Bible reveals many more details of how God will fully implement this plan. But we find its foundation in the book of Genesis in the promises God gave Abraham.

The Bible reveals many aspects of God's master plan for the salvation of mankind. The spiritual dimension of His promise to Abraham is only one part of the story. As physical beings we function in a physical world. Therefore God often achieves His spiritual goals through physical means such as giving or taking away physical blessings—using the principle of rewards for good behavior and punishment for sin.

For example, we need to consider why God promised to make of Abraham a "great nation" (Genesis 12:2). Many modern students of the Bible fail to understand the importance of this great *physical* promise. Critics of the Bible simply scoff at it altogether because they think the people of Israel never amounted to more than a pair of insignificant kingdoms at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. But they are wrong. God doesn't lie (Titus 1:2). He keeps His promises. We will soon see *why* and *how* God has fulfilled this particular promise of national greatness to Abraham.

Promises of great national and material blessings

From Genesis 12 through 22, seven passages describe the promises God gave and reconfirmed to Abraham. In the initial account (Genesis 12:1-3) God told Abraham to leave his homeland and family. This was the first condition Abraham had to meet before he could receive the promise.

When Abraham willingly obeyed, God then promised to bless him and make his name great. His progeny would also become great. (As we will see, the results of this promise would rank among the world's greatest historical developments.)

A few verses later God appeared to Abraham and promised his descendants the land of Canaan (verse 7). God's promises unequivocally included material aspects—physical land and possessions.

Genesis 13 provides more details about the promises. After the account of Abraham's willingness to give the fertile plain adjoining the Jordan River to his nephew Lot (verses 5-13), God, in turn, promised all of the land of Canaan to Abraham *forever* (verses 14-17), indicating that the *temporal* and *eternal* aspects of His promise were closely related.

Although Abraham was still childless, God also promised that his

descendants would be counted "*as the dust of the earth*; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then [Abraham's] descendants also could be numbered" (verse 16). The immense scope of this promise—the almost limitless expansion of Abraham's descendants—should not be taken lightly. As we will see, it has enormous implications.

About a decade later God again appeared to Abraham in a vision. Notwithstanding that he still had no offspring, God again promised him an heir—and this heir, said God, would come "from your own body" (Genesis 15:4).

An incredible multitude of people would develop from that heir, Isaac. "Then [God] brought [Abraham] outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them ... So shall your descendants be'" (verse 5). How did Abraham respond? "And he *believed* in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (verse 6).

Abraham's confidence that he could trust God to keep His word—even far into the future—was one of the reasons God loved Abraham. God chose him to be not only the father of several mighty nations but



Shaun Verish

Faithful Abraham obeyed God, leaving his homeland and traveling to a land God promised would belong to him and his descendants forever.

“the father of *all those who believe*” (Romans 4:11). God was working out a dual role for faithful Abraham.

A few verses later God promised him not only innumerable descendants but all the territory stretching “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18). This swath of territory covered much more land than the land God included in His original promise of the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:6-7; 17:8; 24:7).

God expands His promises

As Abraham further demonstrated his faithfulness, God expanded the scope of His promises to him. Ultimately they involved far more than He had originally revealed. The most detailed accounting of God’s astounding promises to Abraham appears in Genesis 17.

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly ... As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.

“No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have



“Look now toward heaven,” God told Abraham, “and count the stars ... So shall your descendants be.”

made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (verses 1-8).

As with earlier statements of this promise, God’s blessing was still conditional and based on Abraham’s obedience and commitment to maturing spiritually. Here God again reminds him of this by saying, “I am Almighty

PhotoDisc

God; walk before Me and be blameless” (verse 1; compare Matthew 5:48).

A “great nation” is expanded to “many nations”

Remember that an important part of God’s promise was to greatly multiply Abraham’s descendants. Here God emphasized this yet-to-be reality by renaming the patriarch. Up to this point he had been known as Abram. God now told him: “No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations” (Genesis 17:5). As mentioned earlier, Abram means “exalted father;” but *Abraham* means “father of a multitude.”

God elaborated on this aspect of His promise: “I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you” (verse 6; see also verses 15-16).

God continued: “Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, *all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession*; and I will be their God ... You shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations” (verses 8-9). The account in Genesis 17 establishes God’s commitment to Abraham as an “*everlasting covenant*” (verses 7, 13, 19), a *binding agreement* obligating God to give the patriarch’s descendants the land of Canaan in perpetuity (verse 8). God’s commitment to Abraham was major and far-reaching.

The sixth account of God’s promise to Abraham appears in Genesis 18 in a setting immediately before the destruction of the sin-infested cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham’s angelic guests—messengers with news about the divine punishment to come on the two cities—reconfirmed the soon-coming birth of a son to the 99-year-old Abraham and his wife, Sarah, 10 years his junior (verses 10-14).

With God promising that He would not “hide” His intentions from Abraham (Genesis 18:17; Amos 3:7), the angels then visiting the aged patriarch affirmed the promises that Abraham would “surely become a great and mighty nation”—a physical, material and national commitment of immense scope. They also reconfirmed the messianic promise that “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him” (Genesis 18:18).

Dramatically fulfilling the promise, about a year after this encounter Sarah gave birth to Isaac (Genesis 21:1-3). First Abraham had proven himself faithful to God. Now, miraculously, God proved His faithfulness to His commitment to Abraham.

Abraham’s supreme test

The climax of these seven accounts of God’s promises appears in Genesis 22. Here we find one of the most significant events in the Bible.

This is God's final elaboration to Abraham of His promise.

In this account Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac foreshadows the foundational event of God's plan to offer salvation to all—God's willingness to offer His only Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice (John 3:16-17).

Earlier we noted that God's promises were dependent on Abraham's continued obedience (Genesis 12:1; 17:9). But after the events of Genesis 22 God transformed His covenant with Abraham by elevating it to a new level—and with good cause.

God told Abraham to take Isaac, the son of the promise (Romans 9:9), and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:2). Abraham's supreme test of faith had arrived.

By this time in his life Abraham had learned to trust God implicitly.

Does God Keep His Word?

Does God keep His promises and commitments even when humans fail to abide by theirs? God's character and values never change. Therefore He could never have abandoned His promises to ancient Israel. Through the mouth of one of His prophets He exclaimed to Israel: "For I am the LORD, I do not change; *therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob*. Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you..." (Malachi 3:6-7).

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised that Israel as a nation would continue to exist as long as the sun, moon and stars continued to shine (Jeremiah 31:35-36). He promises to protect and guide the destiny of *all* the descendants of ancient Israel until they—including those known as Jews and those among the lost 10 tribes—are *restored as one nation* at Christ's return.

God has made wonderful promises—some to individuals, some to nations and some to all of mankind. If He ever abandoned any promise and commitment to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants, the Israelites, how could we ever believe He would keep His promises to us?

Our faith rests on the premise that God means what He says. It is because He is faithful to *all* of His commitments that we have a solid basis for trusting Him to keep His promises.

We see, then, that God's promises to ancient Israel are *vitaly important* to us personally. The truthfulness of the Bible itself would collapse if God failed to fulfill His commitments to those exiled people. This is another reason for studying this subject. Either these so-called lost tribes still exist or God was not faithful to His promises.

By confirming God's continual involvement in the past, present and future of the children of Israel, we validate His unwavering commitment to keep His word. Such confirmation gives us a solid basis for our faith that God will keep His promises to us.

By fulfilling His promises to all of the tribes of Israel, God will also, at the return of Christ, prove to scoffers and doubters that He is trustworthy. He will demonstrate to *all nations* that He stands behind every word He has ever spoken through His prophets. He will confirm that He has the power to direct history as He desires.

As Jesus said of God, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

He had long experienced God's wisdom, truth and faithfulness. He proceeded to do as he was told, only to be miraculously stopped at the precise moment he would have slain his son (verses 9-11).

We can learn several profound lessons from this incident. First, God—whether in ancient or modern times—has never sanctioned worshipping Him with a human sacrifice.

Second, God prohibited Israel from following the pagan practice of offering firstborn children as sacrifices to idols. Human sacrifice was part and parcel of the Mesopotamian society from which Abraham was called, as well as the nations around him. But God made sure his faithful servant would *not* actually slay his son, although Abraham did not know in advance what God had in mind.

In the next verse God's words reveal what He really wanted to find out about Abraham: "Now *I know that you fear God*, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (verse 12). In his willingness to obey the living God, Abraham had proven that he would relinquish that which was most precious to him, his only heir (verse 16; compare John 3:16). God did not want Abraham's son as a sacrifice. But He did want to know if Abraham *trusted* Him enough to make the hardest choice God could put before him. Abraham passed the test.

Third, Abraham's behavior demonstrated he was a man fit for the role of "father of all those who believe" (Romans 4:11-22; Galatians 3:9; Hebrews 11:17-19)—that he was a suitable founder of the family of countless descendants who could become the people of God (Genesis 18:19).

However, God could not complete the plan He initiated through Abraham without involving the problem of human sin, and that problem would later require the sacrifice of humanity's Redeemer—Jesus the Messiah, the Lamb of God (John 1:29).

God's commitment becomes unconditional

At this point God's promises to Abraham—physical and spiritual—became unconditional. His words, "By Myself have I sworn" (Genesis 22:16), show that the fulfillment of the promise no longer depended on Abraham. The fulfillment of the promise would now depend solely on God Himself. He *unconditionally committed Himself* to fulfill His promise to Abraham and his descendants.

God puts His own truthfulness and integrity on the line in these commitments. He has *unconditionally bound Himself* to bring all of His promises to pass in all their details.

Because we understand the unconditional nature of God's promises, we have a better picture of what to look for down through history

concerning the descendants of ancient Israel. Since God cannot annul His promise to Abraham because He will not break His word (Numbers 23:19), every detail in His promises becomes a guide in our search for the identity of the lost 10 tribes of Israel after their exile.

Genesis 22 concludes with God restating the central elements of His commitment to Abraham: “Indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will *greatly multiply* your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies” (verse 17, New American Standard Bible). These physical, material and national blessings continue as clues to the identity of Abraham’s modern descendants.

God continued: “And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (verse 18, NASB). The apostle Paul, commenting on this verse many centuries later in

How Jacob Became Abraham’s Heir

God chose Jacob, the second-born of Isaac’s twins, to receive the birthright inheritance that is usually reserved for the firstborn. This bestowed on him the right to become the family’s patriarch upon Isaac’s death (Genesis 25:29-34). The birthright blessing made Jacob the direct heir of Abraham and the recipient of the divine commitments to Abraham and his posterity.

At the time Jacob received the blessing, he still had not committed himself to live by faith in God. Though God had designated Jacob as heir of Abraham’s blessing shortly before his

“All the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring.”

birth (verse 23), Jacob and his mother were both weak in faith and resorted to deceit to obtain the blessing from Isaac (Genesis 27). This earned Jacob the hatred of his brother. Esau seethed with anger and set out to kill him (verse 41). Their mother heard about Esau’s plans, so she asked Isaac to send Jacob to stay with relatives far away so he would be safe (verses 42-46).

So Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob back to Rebekah’s family in northern Mesopotamia. Apparently the only reason they mentioned to their large household was that they wanted Jacob to find a wife from among Rebekah’s relatives. This was true, but Rebekah was also trying to prevent Esau from killing Jacob.

Before sending Jacob away, however, Isaac summoned his overly ambitious and crafty son and blessed him again. Isaac apparently forgave his son’s previous deceptive behavior and this time willingly repeated his original blessing. By this time Isaac had probably remembered and acknowledged that God had designated Jacob, even before his birth, as the heir.

Then Isaac rehearsed some of the key covenant promises that God had made to him and Abraham (Genesis 28:1-5). In doing so Isaac openly announced to the family that Jacob was indeed inheriting the prime responsibility for the family’s *everlasting* relationship with God (Genesis 17:19).

God was making sure no one forgot His promises to Abraham. He was formally passing them from one generation to the next.

Galatians 3:16, explains that this promised blessing refers to Jesus Christ: “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, Christ” (NASB). Through Christ, as the Seed of Abraham, God would make salvation available to the whole of humanity (compare John 3:16).

Promises renewed to Abraham’s son Isaac

God renewed His promises to Abraham in subsequent generations. He reconfirmed His covenant to the patriarch’s son Isaac (Genesis 26:1-5) and to his grandson Jacob (Genesis 27:26-29; 28:1-4, 10-14; 35:9-12).

Through Jacob God passed the national and material aspects of His promises on to the descendants of Abraham’s great-great-grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph (Genesis 48:1-22).

Isaac passed on the key covenant promises to Jacob: “May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, that you may be a *company of peoples*. May he *give to you the blessing of Abraham*, to you and to your offspring with you, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien—land that God gave to Abraham” (Genesis 28:3-4, NRSV).

As Jacob hurriedly left home, he possessed both the birthright promise and a special blessing. But his life had suddenly turned upside down. What did it all mean? Would his grandfather’s and father’s God really be there for him too?

Jacob must have thought about the stories he had heard while growing up about his family’s encounters with this awesome, divine being. Would that same great God honor what he had worked so deceitfully to obtain, even though God had promised it to him before he was born?

It was at this point in his life that God personally revealed Himself to Jacob. “[Jacob] came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on

the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

“And the LORD stood beside him and said, ‘I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and *all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring*. Know that *I am with you and will keep you wherever you go*, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’

“Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!’ And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called that place Bethel . . .” (Genesis 28:11-19, NRSV). Jacob now knew for certain that he was the officially confirmed heir of the promises made to Abraham.

That the Bible records in some detail how these promises of blessings pass from one generation to another is additional evidence that God's covenant with Abraham included physical, material and national aspects besides the vital messianic prophecies.

God's promise to Isaac that "I will give to your descendants *all these lands*" (Genesis 26:3-4) implies great material blessings. God also promised him, as He had Abraham, almost limitless descendants, telling him his descendants would "multiply as the stars of heaven" (verse 4).

At one level this promise would be fulfilled by the time the several million Israelites reached Mount Sinai under Moses' leadership and, later, at the time of Solomon (Deuteronomy 1:10; 1 Kings 4:20-21). But Moses himself was aware that the blessings of great multitudes were to be multiplied many times over what had already occurred by his time (Deuteronomy 1:11).

Jacob receives the birthright and blessing

The physical blessings passed down to Isaac normally would have gone to the firstborn son, Esau (Genesis 25:21-26). However, Jacob, the younger of twin brothers, persuaded Esau to sell his birthright to him for a meal of stew (verse 29-34).

What was the birthright, and why was it important? *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* explains that the birthright was "the right belonging naturally to the firstborn son ... Such a person ultimately became the head of the family, the line being continued through him. As firstborn he inherited a double portion of the paternal estate ... The firstborn was responsible for ... exercising authority over the household as a whole" (1979, Vol. 1, "Birthright," pp. 515-516).

To attain the blessings of the birthright from his father, Jacob resorted to tricking the blind and aged Isaac into believing he was Esau (Genesis 27:18-27). Little did Jacob know that deceit was unnecessary. God had already revealed, even before the births of Jacob and Esau, that Jacob would be the stronger of the two and that Esau would, in the end, become subservient to Jacob (Genesis 25:23).

But God allowed Jacob to receive the right-by-birth promise to be the family patriarch and to receive the best of the family inheritance from his father without intervening to change the circumstance. Later He would teach Jacob to cease trusting in his own deceitful devices.

Now notice the blessing Isaac pronounced on Jacob: "Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, *of the fatness of the earth*, and plenty of grain and wine. *Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you*. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow

down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!" (Genesis 27:28-29). These were no idle words. Isaac was officially passing on to Jacob the awesome promises God made to Abraham.

Later, through a dream, God confirmed to Jacob that he indeed would receive the birthright promise. God then revealed to Jacob that his descendants, numbering "as the dust of the earth," would "spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south"—*in all directions from the Middle East* (Genesis 28:12-14). In later chapters we will see how this prophecy has been fulfilled in an amazing way.

Joseph's two national identities

In Genesis 35 we encounter another aspect of the birthright promise. Here God promised Jacob that "a *nation* and a *company of nations*" would proceed from him (verse 11). Knowledge of this aspect of Israel's inheritance is essential if we are to understand key prophecies. The birthright promise would be fulfilled in *two separate national entities*.

In Genesis 48 Jacob passed this part of God's promise to



Jacob's blessing included land—national territory—that his two grandsons' descendants would inherit "for an everlasting possession." They also would grow into "a multitude of people."

Abraham and Isaac to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. At the same time Jacob placed *his own name* on these two grandsons (verse 16). As a result, many later references to "Jacob" or "Israel" in the prophetic books of the Bible refer primarily to these two branches of Jacob's descendants.

Jacob's blessing included *land—national territory*—that his two grandsons' descendants would inherit "for an everlasting possession." They also would grow into "a *multitude of people*" (verse 4). Here, for a second time, we see the remarkable promise that Jacob's

descendants—specifically those who would spring from Ephraim and Manasseh—would grow into “a multitude of nations” and a single great nation, respectively (verse 19).

Not all dimensions of the promises, however, would go to Joseph and his descendants. Judah would receive a promise with an important spiritual dimension. Through Jacob God gave the prophecy that “the scepter [ruler’s staff] shall not depart from Judah” (Genesis 49:10). That prophecy pointed both to the dynasty of Israel’s future king, David, and to the role of Jesus, also of the tribe of Judah and a descendant of David, as the Messiah (Luke 1:32; Hebrews 7:14; Revelation



This prophetic passage tells us that the descendants of Joseph will enjoy the blessing of good crops, vast herds of livestock and extensive natural resources such as fine stands of timber and valuable minerals mined from their soil. All these blessings are to be theirs “in the last days.”

5:5). Christ is destined to rule the earth as King of Kings (Revelation 11:15; 17:14; 19:16).

In contrast, the birthright promise of *physical, material and national greatness* went not to Judah but to Joseph, bypassing the firstborn son, Reuben. Notice the circumstances that routed this great promise into Joseph’s hands:

“[Reuben] was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph’s” (1 Chronicles 5:1-2). With the

Photos: iStockphoto

birthright promise, Joseph’s descendants—Ephraim and Manasseh—were to receive the blessings of wealth, power and national prominence.

Blessings for Joseph’s descendants

Perhaps the most revealing of the biblical passages about the birthright promise, however, is in Genesis 49. Here we find Jacob blessing and prophesying about each of his sons’ descendants “*in the last days*” (verse 1). Notice that the blessings Jacob pronounces on the descendants of Joseph *for the last days* are monumental.

“Joseph is like a grapevine that produces *much fruit*, a healthy vine



watered by a spring, whose branches grow over the wall. Archers attack him violently and shoot at him angrily, but he aims his bow well. His arms are made strong. *He gets his power from the Mighty God of Jacob and his strength from the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.*

“Your father’s God helps you. *God Almighty blesses you.* He blesses you with rain from above, with water from springs below, with many babies born to your wives, and many young ones born to your animals. The blessings of your father are greater than the blessings of the oldest mountains, greater than the good things of the long-lasting hills. May these blessings rest on the head of Joseph . . .” (Genesis 49:22-26, New Century Version).

This prophetic passage tells us that Joseph’s descendants “in the last days” will live in a productive, well-watered and fruitful land. They will be a people who have greatly expanded their territory and influence—politically, militarily, economically and culturally—a people “whose branches grow over the wall,” or *beyond their natural borders*. They will be a people that, on occasion, will be attacked by other nations but will generally be victorious. Their triumphs will sometimes

seem “miraculous” or “providential” because the Almighty God is their helper and source of blessings.

They will be a people who live in an unusually favorable climate that easily supports their steadily expanding population. They will enjoy the blessing of good crops, vast herds of livestock and extensive natural resources such as fine stands of timber and valuable minerals mined from their soil.

In other words, we can expect them to possess the choice blessings and resources of the earth. All of these blessings are to be theirs “in the last days” (Genesis 49:1).

Where can we find the descendants of Joseph, the lost tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh? This list of blessings eliminates most of the nations of the world as contenders. To find them we must ask: Which nations possess these blessings in our world? God promised all these blessings to the descendants of Joseph “in the last days.” Since God does not lie, we can trust Him to keep those promises.

What does the evidence tell us? As we will see, the evidence is overwhelmingly in God’s favor. If we believe the promises and God’s fulfillment of them, our outlook toward the world will be quite different from the outlook of those who remain ignorant of this knowledge.

In the nearly 3,700 years since God gave these promises, few nations can lay claim to blessings anywhere near these. Even fewer can claim the kind of economic stature and national prominence—even super-power status—promised to Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, “in the last days.”

Two candidates, however, perfectly meet the exacting criteria of these prophecies: the United States of America and the British Commonwealth of nations. How well does their apparent fit mesh with the evidence we find? To answer that question, we embark on a study of historical evidence of the tribes of Israel from their beginning as a nation down to our day.

Israel’s Golden Age

“So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the [Euphrates] River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt” (1 Kings 4:21).

The covenant by which ancient Israel would become “the people of God” (Judges 20:2) was made at Mount Sinai shortly after the Israelites were freed from Egyptian slavery. God’s covenant with the nation was based on His promises to and covenant with Abraham (Exodus 2:23-24; 33:1). In it God defined the relationship He wanted with Jacob’s descendants, now the fledgling nation of Israel en route to the Promised Land.

God offered this covenant to Israel as a unilateral declaration of the opportunities He was offering Abraham’s descendants and an unambiguous explanation of the Israelites’ obligations to Him. Their part in making the covenant was only that of accepting or rejecting God’s offer and then, after accepting it, performing the commitment they had made.

God provided them the same opportunity to agree to walk before Him blamelessly that He had given to Abraham. He consistently reminded them: “For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore *be holy*, for I am holy” (Leviticus

“I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!”

11:45). The effectiveness of the relationship depended on their continued attention to living and behaving as a *holy*—set-apart—people.

When the children of Israel heard the terms of God’s covenant, they had two clear-cut choices. They could accept the role of living as God’s *holy people*—His representatives to the nations (Deuteronomy 4:6)—or they could accept the consequences for refusing to cooperate.

At that time the prospect of their surviving without God’s help was bleak. God had just delivered them from the cruelty of Egyptian bondage. They had no homeland, and no other nation was inclined to accept

them as residents. They found themselves caught in a no-man's-land, a harsh and unforgiving environment.

God had knowingly made the option of their becoming His holy people too attractive to refuse. But He did not force them into this role without their willing consent. They had to make a choice.

He spoke to them from Mount Sinai and revealed to them His Ten Commandments—His basic definition of holiness. The Commandments, along with the statutes and judgments God revealed to Moses, became “the Book of the Covenant.” Moses then “took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient’” (Exodus 24:7; compare verse 3).

In spite of the covenant, the Israelites of the generation God had just freed from Egyptian slavery was still unsure and suspicious of their Creator’s concern for them. They said to Moses: “We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?” (Deuteronomy 5:24-26).

The Israelites feared being too close to God. They did not trust Him. They lacked the faith of Abraham. So they said to Moses, “You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it” (verse 27). They were not ready for a truly close, personal relationship with God.

Why the New Covenant would be necessary

God, of course, knew their hearts better than they knew them. He understood that the covenant He was making with them had one major weakness: *There was no provision in it to change the human heart.* That would have to wait until the first coming of the Messiah, until Jesus Christ could be slain as the sacrificial Lamb of God (Hebrews 9:26).

Notice God’s response to the Israelites’ declaration that they would obey Him: “I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. *Oh that they had such a heart in them,* that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!” (Deuteronomy 5:28-29, NASB).

But they did not have such a heart. God did not include a new heart, empowered by His Spirit, as part of the birthright promise. That blessing would come later as part of the *scepter promise* God gave to Judah that He would fulfill after the death of Christ (Isaiah 53:11-12; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:3-12).

Notice what Peter said centuries later when God finally made available the Holy Spirit to all His people on that Feast of Pentecost following Christ’s death. He exclaimed: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and *you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* For the *promise* is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:1, 38-39).

Because God did not give them the Holy Spirit, the people of ancient Israel were never fully able to live according to the spiritual intent of God’s laws and thus become a truly holy people. Their human nature and the influences of the other people around them consistently led them astray.

Even the generation God led out of Egypt by great miracles died in the wilderness of the Middle Eastern desert because of its constant disbelief, stubbornness, complaints and disobedience. God did not allow that generation to inherit the land He had promised Abraham’s descendants. Those people were unwilling to reflect the holiness He desired.

Nevertheless, God kept His promise to Abraham and gave the land of the promise to their children under the leadership of Joshua. So



Israel’s territory expanded greatly during the reign of King David, and its influence extended even further under his son and successor, Solomon.

“Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel” (Joshua 24:31).

Herein lies an important lesson. Just because a generation of His people becomes disobedient doesn't mean God forsakes His promises to their children. They also are heirs of His promise to Abraham.

God may, for a time, withhold or delay the blessings He has promised. But He will eventually give them. He always keeps His word. For that reason we can be certain God will fulfill the biblical prophecies about the children of Israel in the last days.

Israel becomes a kingdom

For the next several hundred years God sent prophets and judges to guide the people, to teach them His ways and resolve controversies among them. But many times they turned their back on Him (Psalm 78:56-57). They fell short in living up to their commitment to be a holy people. The Bible summarizes the era of the judges in these words:

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

Yet during that era, and later, God heard their prayers in times of crisis and fought their battles when they cried out for His mercy (Psalm 106:39-45). He “was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, *because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence” (2 Kings 13:23).

Finally Israel asked the prophet Samuel for a king. “Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and . . . said to him, ‘Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.’ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ So Samuel prayed to the LORD.

“And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them . . . Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them



Some Bible critics have gone so far as to question the existence of biblical figures such as King David. This inscription, found at the biblical city of Dan and referring to the dynasty founded by David, silenced many outspoken doubters.

the behavior of the king who will reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:4-9).

God honored their request and directed Samuel to anoint Saul—apparently one of the most physically impressive men in Israel—as their king (1 Samuel 10:17-24). God was willing to work with and support Israel's king if he would behave righteously. But Saul became arrogant, stubborn and self-willed. Physically he appeared to be everything the people could have asked for as a king, but his heart was not right before God. So God decided to replace him.

Paul explained 1,000 years later: “And when He had removed him,

With Justice for All

During the golden age under David and Solomon, Israel's efforts to promote fairness and justice for its citizens rivaled modern efforts toward these noble ideals. Both kings were known for administering justice to their people (2 Samuel 8:15; 1 Chronicles 18:14; 1 Kings 3:3). As a model nation, Israel attracted international leaders seeking to view its prosperity and culture firsthand. One such dignitary was the queen of Sheba.

After testing Solomon with questions, personally reviewing his building projects and noting the Israelite culture, the famous queen said to Solomon: “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard.

“Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness” (1 Kings 10:6-9; compare with 2 Chronicles 9:1-8).

Happiness and peace flourish in an atmosphere of justice and fairness for all regardless of their race or background.

As part of His covenant instructions, God had told the Israelites to treat fairly all people residing within the boundaries of their nation. He specifically said, “One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you” (Exodus 12:49). Expounding on this principle, God added, “You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:21).

Strangers were to have the same rights as natives. Judges and rulers were to apply laws evenhandedly. The opportunity to worship God on His Holy Days was to be available to strangers if they so desired (Exodus 12:48; Leviticus 16:29). When Israel rested on the seventh-day Sabbath, strangers in the land were to be allowed to rest as well (Exodus 20:10).

Just like native Israelites, strangers were welcome to offer sacrifices to God (Numbers 15:14). Health laws applied equally to natives and strangers (Leviticus 17:15), and God instructed the Israelites to assist the poor and the stranger among them (Leviticus 19:10; 23:22; 25:35). In short, God told Israel to love strangers and treat them as though they were native born (Leviticus 19:34).

God intended that the right to and privilege of worshipping Him and living in His model nation be available to all. “Justice for all” was God's obvious expectation.

He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.' From this man's seed, *according to the promise*, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus" (Acts 13:22-23).

The beginning of Israel's golden age

The story of Israel's rise into a golden age during the reign of David and his son Solomon, and then its disintegration into two separate

International Trade: A Source of Solomon's Wealth

Solomon built many merchant ships manned by both Israelite and Phoenician sailors. The wealth accumulated by this maritime traffic is astounding, even by modern standards.

How far did those fleets travel to amass such wealth? We don't know, but the Scriptures tell us the sailors sometimes required three years to make a round-trip voyage because the distance was so great. They brought back valuable commodities such as gold, silver and ivory along with exotic curiosities such as apes and monkeys (1 Kings 10:22).

More than two millennia later Ferdinand Magellan sailed around the world on a voyage that also took three years. The fleets of Solomon and the Phoenicians could sail far and wide over the oceans. The Scriptures note that King Hiram's mariners "knew the sea" (1 Kings 9:27).

Having an international fleet of ships, an alliance with the Phoenicians and control of the major Middle Eastern inland trade routes, Solomon engaged in his own import and export ventures. For example, "Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders received them from Kue at a price. A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred fifty; so through the king's traders they were *exported* to all

the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram" (1 Kings 10:28-29, NRSV).

The Bible notes that Solomon's yearly base revenues amounted to 50,000 pounds of gold, not counting the gold he received from gifts and tribute (2 Chronicles 9:13-14). Having access to this vast wealth, Solomon built a magnificent temple for God and a palace complex for himself in Jerusalem.

He covered the inside walls and even the floors of the temple with pure gold. Images of two cherubim, each with two almost eight-foot-wide outstretched wings, overshadowed the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant. Artisans overlaid these likenesses with pure gold. Craftsmen made the seven-branched menorah, table for the showbread, bowls, pans, other lampstands, lamp trimmers, ladles and censers of solid gold (2 Chronicles 3-4).

Solomon had a large throne of ivory overlaid with gold. He supplied his guards with hundreds of golden ceremonial shields, the large ones made with about 7½ pounds of hammered gold. His palace's dining service included solid-gold cups and plates. The Scriptures note that none of them was made of silver during Solomon's time because it was considered too ordinary (1 Kings 10:21). This was literally Israel's golden era.

kingdoms, is a story of both triumph and bitter tragedy.

Together these events underscore God's faithfulness to His promises and the tragedy of human weakness. They also highlight the necessity for a major change in the human spirit and the return of Christ as the world's only perfect king.

During the reign of David and Solomon, God fulfilled His promise that Abraham's descendants would rule over a vast territory in the Middle East from Egypt to the Euphrates River. Israel became a great nation.

But, because of the sins of Solomon and his successors, as well as the transgressions of the people themselves, Israel lost it all in the decades after Solomon's death. Here is how it happened.

David became ruler over the tribes of Israel in two stages. First the tribe of Judah anointed him king in Hebron (2 Samuel 2:3-4). From that city David reigned for about seven years before the other tribes made a covenant with him and also accepted him as king. Thus began a period of unity in Israel (2 Samuel 5:1-5; 1 Chronicles 11:3).

As king, David inherited a large and effective military. About 350,000 armed warriors from the tribes of Israel attended his coronation ceremony (1 Chronicles 12:23-40). Soon he began to subdue the unfriendly neighbors who had plagued the Israelites for years.

David reigned a total of 40 years, 33 of them from Jerusalem, the city he captured from the Jebusites and made Israel's capital. His rule signaled Israel's ascent to military and economic preeminence in the Middle East. Modern historians tend to ignore the biblical record and vastly underestimate the size and scope of David's and Solomon's kingdom.

As the *New Unger's Bible Dictionary* explains: "The tendency of scholars in the past has been to give scant credence to the biblical notices of Solomon's power and glory ... Archaeology has vindicated the wide extent of the Davidic-Solomonic empire as delineated in Kings. The general historical background of the Davidic-Solomonic period has also been authenticated.

"Solomon's glory used to be commonly dismissed as 'Semitic exaggeration' or a romantic tale. It was contended that such a sprawling realm could not have existed between great empires like Egypt, the Hittites, Assyria, and Babylonia. The monuments, however, have shown that during the period from 1100 to 900 B.C. the great empires surrounding Israel were either in decline or temporarily inactive, so that Solomon could rule with the splendor attributed to him in the Bible" (1988, "Solomon").

The key to David's success

What was the key to David's military and political success? We find the answer revealed in the first military challenge he faced after

God's Covenant With David

The story of David, Israel's second king, contains all the elements of an exciting adventure story. In David's 71 years, full of rags-to-riches contrasts, David went from his role as the eighth son of an average family, one stuck with the job of taking care of the family's sheep, to the dominant leader of the nation. Fighting wild animals to keep them from preying on his sheep, running for his life from Saul and leading soldiers into battle provided all the adventure anyone could want.

Yet David had a creative side. He was a poet, musician and composer. We find many of his works in the book of Psalms. In his zeal for God he acquired materials for the building of a temple and standardized Israel's formal structure of worship through its priests and musicians. Yet he had his share of weaknesses—sins, faults and family squabbles.

As exciting as aspects of David's life may sound to us, God was attracted to this man for another reason. After Saul's failure to serve as king in the way God desired, the Bible tells us that God sought "a man after His own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). God selected David to succeed Saul for this reason. Though David made serious mistakes, in the end he always repented of his sins and looked to God for forgiveness (Psalm 51). Though king of Israel, he took God more seriously than he took himself.

An astounding promise

Because David was a man after God's own heart, a man with a tender conscience toward his Creator, God made a separate and distinct covenant with him in addition to the covenant He had made with Israel. Accordingly, when David wanted to build a house for God, the Almighty sent a message to David through the prophet Nathan:

"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

Understanding the scope of this promise—that God would establish David's throne forever—is a challenging study. The best-understood aspect of this covenant finds fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah—born of Mary, a literal descendant of David—ruling in the Kingdom of God.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God prophesies of this time: "Behold, the days are coming . . . that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Before Mary's conception of Jesus, an angel told her: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him *the throne of His father David*" (Luke 1:31-32).

These passages show that Jesus was destined to sit on the throne of David. Although these events are sure to come to pass, many mistakenly believe it has already been fulfilled

in Christ. However, it will not be fulfilled in full until He returns.

Human rulers on the throne of David

Another part of God's promise to David was that his descendants would continue to rule over the people of Israel until God established His Kingdom on earth. Misunderstanding when God will establish the Kingdom has led many to mistakenly assume that this promise was fulfilled long ago in Christ and that it no longer has any meaning.

Contrary to people's concept that the Kingdom of God is already on earth in the form of the church or in the hearts of human beings, the Bible plainly says that God will establish His Kingdom when Christ comes a second time to earth (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15). Although men have preached the message of the Kingdom with varying levels of understanding for thousands of years, the Kingdom's appearance on earth has not yet occurred. When it does, the Kingdom of God will replace the world's human governments (for a more complete explanation of this subject, please request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*).

The religious worship God instituted for ancient Israel—with His seventh-day Sabbath and annual Holy Days—also reveals much about the way the nations will worship Him after God sets up His Kingdom on earth. (To study the continuing forms of worship God has established, please request our free booklets *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. All of our booklets are available from our office nearest you or through the literature library of our Web site at www.gnmagazine.org.)

With the understanding that God has not yet established His Kingdom on earth, let's consider some of the Bible's promises that a

descendant of David would continue to rule over Israel's descendants. In 2 Chronicles 13:5 we find that "the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt." Like the preserving properties of salt, a covenant of salt was one that would last. God guaranteed that the "house of David"—his descendants—would continue to exist forever (2 Chronicles 21:7).

Because David's descendants did not continue to obey God, some have mistakenly believed that God was released from His covenant with David. Yet this was not the case. Of David God said: "My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

"If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail.

"My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky" (Psalm 89:28-37; compare with Jeremiah 33:15-21).

Through God's covenant with David we find another biblical proof that Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, continue to exist. They have not died out; they have not disappeared from the face of the earth. Again, God's own credibility is at stake. He tells us in His Word that the descendants of David and the people in his ancient nation will continue to exist.

consolidating all the tribes of Israel under his leadership.

“When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up in search of David; but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the valley of Rephaim.

“David *inquired of the LORD*, ‘Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?’ The LORD said to David, ‘Go up; for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand.’ So David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. He said, ‘*The LORD has burst forth against my enemies before me, like a bursting flood*’” (2 Samuel 5:17-20, NRSV).

David did not have to go looking for trouble. It came to him. But when it did God gave him the victory. As time passed, his enemies formed alliances among themselves to overthrow the kingdom—a kingdom they failed to realize that *God* had established. David was victorious even against alliances of hostile neighbors. “And David became more and more powerful, *because the LORD Almighty was with him*” (1 Chronicles 11:9, NIV).

David’s success was God’s doing. He became the most powerful ruler in the Middle East in his day. Yet he built no monuments to honor himself as was the custom of virtually all the other ancient kings. Therefore, since his exploits are recorded only in the Bible, most historians refuse to acknowledge the prominence of Israel under David and his son and successor, Solomon.

Critics of the Bible point out there is little archaeological evidence to support the Bible’s claims of Israel’s greatness under David and Solomon. Yet the lack of evidence is perfectly understandable in light of the history of Israel and the region.

Armies have fought over and invaded the area countless times over the centuries. Jerusalem alone has been conquered more than 20 times, several of which involved its complete destruction. Parchment and papyrus records from ancient times in Israel have long since turned to dust. But even though such specific hard evidence is sparse, by no means is it nonexistent. In light of the Bible’s perfect accuracy in so many areas, we have no reason to question its statements about Israel under David and Solomon. (For more information about the accuracy of the Bible, be sure to request or download your free copy of the booklet *Is the Bible True?*)

Solomon inherits an empire

King Solomon inherited an immense, powerful and prosperous Middle Eastern empire from his father, David. “For [Solomon] had dominion

over all the region on this side of the [Euphrates] River from Tiph-sah [probably modern Dibseh, where northern Syria borders southern Turkey] even to Gaza [the Philistine city on the Mediterranean coast], namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and he had peace on every side all around him” (1 Kings 4:24).

At that time the people of Judah and Israel “were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the [Euphrates] River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute [taxes] and were Solomon’s subjects all his life” (verses 20-21, NIV).

Two other Middle Eastern powers, Egypt and Tyre (north of Israel on the coast in modern-day Lebanon) chose to become allies of David and Solomon rather than attack Israel and risk being conquered themselves. These two greatly expanded the scope of Israel’s commercial and political might, though during the reign of Solomon their cultural and religious influences would also contribute to Israel’s eventual collapse.

Solomon’s alliance with Hiram of Tyre is probably the primary reason the historical importance of Israel’s power and influence has been obscured in Western history. Modern historians, when describing the pervasive influence of the Phoenician Empire, centered then around Tyre, tend to overlook that Solomon was the real power of the eastern Mediterranean region at the time.

Israel and the Phoenician Empire

The Bible reveals that the history of Israel and Phoenicia was far more intertwined than most historians have recognized. In general they prospered together in good times and suffered together during the bad. They had common enemies. They rose to international power together and were



As recorded in 1 Kings 9:15, Solomon fortified the cities of Hazor, Gezer and Megiddo as administrative and military centers for his growing empire. Identical defensive city gates, like the one above at Megiddo, have been excavated at all three sites—evidence that strongly supports the biblical record.

later conquered by the Assyrian Empire at about the same time.

The people in the coastal area around Tyre and nearby Sidon shared an alphabet and more or less the same Semitic language with Israel. Other than slight cultural and dialectical differences, the languages appear to have been almost identical.

Israel's special relationship with King Hiram of Tyre began during David's reign (1 Chronicles 14:1) and continued beyond the reign of Solomon. Historians know Tyre as the chief city of the mighty Phoenicians.

The 1999 *Encarta Multimedia Encyclopedia* says the Phoenicians "became the most notable traders and sailors of the ancient world. The fleets of the coast cities traveled throughout the Mediterranean and even into the Atlantic Ocean, and other nations competed to employ Phoenician ships and crews in their navies... The city-kingdoms founded many colonies, notably Utica and Carthage in north Africa, on the islands of Rhodes and Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea, and Tarshish in southern Spain. Tyre was the leader of the Phoenician cities before they were subjugated, once again, by Assyria during the 8th century BC" ("Phoenicia").

Solomon greatly expanded Israel's partnership with Hiram. It appears that a covenant of kinship was formally made between the two rulers, a "treaty of brotherhood" (Amos 1:9, NIV). As we will see, that relationship would prove to be one of Solomon's tragic mistakes. But temporarily it greatly increased the prosperity of both kingdoms, and it was this partnership that achieved international fame as the Phoenician Empire.

In evaluating the power and prestige of the mighty Phoenicians, historians tend to look no further than the maritime cities on the coast of modern Lebanon. They fail to recognize the partnership that existed between Hiram of Tyre and David and Solomon of Israel. As a result, they fail to see that David and Solomon, not Hiram, were the dominant rulers of the commercial partnership that became known to the outside world as *Phoenicia*.

Israel's contribution to Phoenician power

In his book *Lebanon Yesterday and Today*, John Christopher succinctly describes the region that historians regard as ancient Phoenicia. "When Phoenicia was at the peak of its power about 1000 B.C. [during the reign of David and Solomon], the chief city-states were, from south to north, Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and Aradus (situated on an island off the Syrian coast beyond the Lebanese frontier)" (1966, p. 43).

But anciently the word *Phoenicia* sometimes referred to much more than just those few coastal cities. It even included much of the *inland* area of the "land of Canaan" that was the territory of ancient Israel.

This important information is often overlooked in historical accounts of ancient Phoenicia.

Christopher explains: "During the third millennium [B.C.], Byblos and the Lebanese coast in general were often referred to as *the land of Canaan*, and its inhabitants as Canaanites. Sometime later the more familiar terms, Phoenicia and Phoenicians, appeared. Phoenicia sometimes specifically referred to the coastal section of *the much larger land of Canaan that reached well inland*" (p. 41, emphasis added).

From the point of view of the Phoenician coastal cities, a cooperative



Phoenicia's mighty trading ships, called "ships of Tarshish" in the Bible, easily traversed the Mediterranean Sea and probably parts of the Atlantic Ocean as well. Alliances between Phoenicia and Israel proved highly profitable to both kingdoms.

alliance with Israel was a geopolitical necessity. Militarily, Israel was the cities' most powerful neighbor, far too powerful for Tyre's Hiram to ignore.

David's conquests of Edom, Moab and Ammon (modern Jordan) and Aram (modern Syria) gave Israel control over most of the vital inland trade routes. Tyre and Sidon controlled the maritime trade of the Mediterranean region. The weakness of the Phoenician

port cities was their almost total dependence on trade for their survival.

Israel was, to a great extent, self-sufficient, producing large quantities of agricultural exports such as wine, olive oil and wheat. But the Phoenician coastal area around Tyre and Sidon was mountainous, leaving little land for agricultural production. Reflecting the scarcity of tillable land, they imported considerable foodstuffs from Israel. Strong political and commercial ties quickly developed between the two kingdoms, but Israel was by far the more powerful of the two.

The port cities of Tyre and Sidon shared manpower with Israel for the gathering of materials for Israel's temple (1 Kings 5:8-11, 18). Solomon even conscripted a labor force of 30,000 men to work in Lebanon to secure timber for the temple's construction (verses 13-14).

The Phoenician port cities also gave Israel direct access to vast international markets through their maritime control of the Mediterranean Sea.

Historians have records of the Phoenicians venturing into the Atlantic Ocean at least as far as the British Isles, and some believe they traveled far beyond. This, then, means Israel had the same access to these areas.



The Bible records the alliances between Phoenicia and Israel that were beneficial for both powers. The Phoenicians provided skilled manpower and expertise, as well as building materials such as the prized cedars of Lebanon, above, for the most important construction projects of David and Solomon.

The Scriptures even note that two Israelite tribes, Asher and Dan, had developed their own maritime expertise long before the days of David and Solomon of Israel and King Hiram of Tyre (Judges 5:17). Solomon built his own fleet of ships and stationed them at Israel's port city of Ezion Geber (1 Kings 9:26), providing trade access to east Africa and Asia via the Red and Arabian seas.

Though the Israelites had their own experienced navigators, the Phoenicians also supplied them with "seamen who knew the sea, to work with the servants of Solomon," in their joint maritime commercial ventures (verses 27-28). For more details, read "International Trade: A Source of Solomon's Wealth," page 32.

Israel, under David and Solomon, was a full partner in Phoenicia's international great-

ness and fame. The international commercial and political influence of Solomon was far greater than most recent historians have perceived. During this time, it is likely that some of Israel's traders settled in the British Isles, establishing small colonies. Although historical information about this period is sparse, many ancient traditions indicate this is what happened.

Why God gave Israel an empire

In the days of Moses, when Israel came into existence as a nation, God explained His purpose for making the Israelites a people of influence and power. He told them: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to

Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...*" (Exodus 19:5-6).

God intended to use them as a *model nation*. He had Moses tell them: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you... Be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding *in the sight of the peoples* who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'" (Deuteronomy 4:2, 6).

God wanted Israel to *set an example* that would *teach* other nations the benefits that come from obeying Him—faithfully keeping His laws. When He established Israel as a great nation He gave Solomon *wisdom* that exceeded the understanding of the other rulers in the region. Solomon became internationally famous for his wisdom (1 Kings 4:29-34), and his subjects apparently were at peace within their lands (see "With Justice for All," page 31).

God intended that the wisdom of His way of life and His laws be made available to other nations. He gave Israel a magnificent opportunity to spiritually enrich or bless "all the families of the earth," as He had promised Abraham.

But neither Solomon nor the people he led kept their eyes on that objective. The physical benefits of prosperity, wealth and fame became their chief focus. They lost sight of the reason for their existence as a nation.

Again, the problem was human nature. Solomon increasingly yielded to his own weaknesses until, at the end of his life, he had abandoned the great God who had given him an empire. In the next chapter we'll learn how this happened and the consequences that came from it.

From Empire to Exile

“But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you...” (Deuteronomy 28:15).

God’s desire for Israel to be a model nation carried with it grave responsibilities. God had no intention of allowing Israel—the nation He created to be the world’s model of righteousness—to escape the consequences of abandoning His ways and sinking to the level of the surrounding nations.

Before they entered the Promised Land, God had specifically warned the Israelites to make no alliances with any nations worshipping false gods: “You shall make *no covenant* with them, nor with their gods ... *lest they make you sin against Me*. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you” (Exodus 23:32-33).

For the same reasons, He told them not to intermarry with the surrounding nations: “Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall

“If you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them ...”

not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly” (Deuteronomy 7:3-4).

Solomon ignored both commands. First he made a treaty with the Pharaoh of Egypt that he sealed by accepting Pharaoh’s daughter in marriage (1 Kings 3:1). Also, “there was peace between Hiram [king of Tyre] and Solomon, and the two of them *made a treaty together*” (1 Kings 5:12).

At the beginning of his reign Solomon loved God and simply followed in the footsteps of his father David. At that time God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said: “Ask! What shall I give you?” (1 Kings 3:5).

In his dream Solomon made a wise choice. He asked for an understanding heart so he could properly fulfill his kingly responsibility to render just judgment for his people. Through his dream Solomon perceived that God was pleased with his humble, unselfish attitude. God

then promised not only to give what he requested, but also riches, honor and long life, provided that Solomon would continue to live within the terms of Israel’s covenant with God.

Shortly after Solomon completed and dedicated the temple, God appeared in a dream a second time to him. “I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have sanctified this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually” (1 Kings 9:3).

God then *conditionally* promised to Solomon to establish the throne of his dynasty over the people of Israel living in their Promised Land forever. In case Solomon were to fail to follow God with integrity, God explained the consequences.

“If you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples” (verses 6-7, NIV).

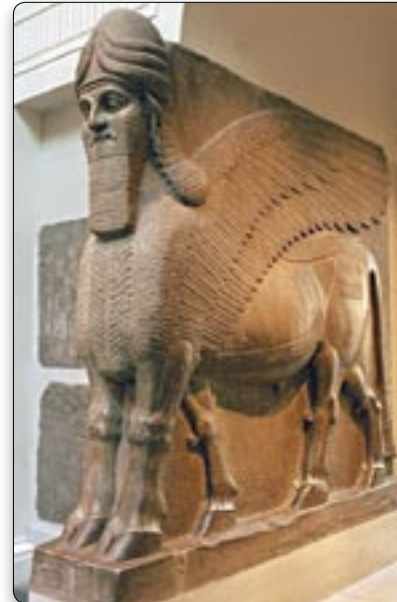
Solomon’s example corrupts the nation

God not only prohibited a king of Israel from marrying pagans, but He specifically forbade him to “multiply wives for himself,” as was customary among gentile rulers (Deuteronomy 17:17). Solomon made this deadly mistake.

“But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter

of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love” (1 Kings 11:1-2).

“For it was so, when Solomon was old, that *his wives turned his*



Giant winged-bull statues guarded the entrances to the palaces of Assyria’s warrior kings. God warned the Israelites they would fall victim to Assyria’s might if they refused to repent.

heart after other gods ... Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites ... Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab ... and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

“So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice ... Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, ‘*Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.*’

“Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away the whole kingdom, *but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen*” (verses 4-13).

Israel splits into two kingdoms

God was true to His word. By the time Solomon died, about 931 B.C., the tribes occupying the northern part of the nation were discontented with Solomon’s heavy taxation and forced-labor practices (1 Kings 4:7, 22, 26-28; 5:13, 15). When his son Rehoboam came to the throne, the northern tribes petitioned for relief.

Rehoboam asked his counselors for advice. The older men suggested he respond to the petitioners positively, relieving the tax burden and making life better for the average citizen. However, the younger counselors argued that Rehoboam should exercise strong control as an absolute monarch over his kingdom, that he should demand even greater tax revenues. Rehoboam unwisely decided to follow the advice of the younger generation.

The result was predictable. The northern 10 tribes seceded and installed Jeroboam, a former high official under Solomon, as their king just as the prophet Ahijah had foretold years earlier (1 Kings 11:28-40; 12:20). Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to the house of David.

Rehoboam’s first reaction was to invade the northern tribes with an army of 180,000 soldiers to attempt to teach the northern tribes a lesson (1 Kings 12:21). But God sent this word to Judah’s leadership: “Thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house, *for this thing is from Me.*’ Therefore they obeyed the word of the LORD, and turned

back, according to the word of the LORD” (verse 24). They called off the invasion. The era of a divided kingdom began.

At this point, more than 200 years before the Assyrians conquered the northern 10 tribes, they became separate as the kingdom, or house, of Israel. The southern tribes of Judah, Benjamin and a part of Levi would then be known as the kingdom, or house, of Judah. The scepter promise of a divine king remained with the tribe of Judah.

The northern tribes kept the name of *Jacob*, or *Israel*. With them went the birthright promise of *national greatness, prosperity and wealth*. To them went, by right of birth, the physical blessings and national standing God had promised to Joseph.

From that momentous separation of Israel and Judah, the Bible records



The kingdom of Israel quickly degenerated into idolatry under King Jeroboam, who instituted a new national religion. Fertility figurines, left, are commonly found during excavations of Israelite cities. At Dan, above, a large reconstructed altar from Roman times probably sits on the same spot where Jeroboam constructed a pagan altar centuries earlier.

a 200-year progression of 10 dynasties, presided over by no fewer than 19 monarchs reigning over the northern kingdom.

God’s offer to Jeroboam

When God first sent the prophet Ahijah to inform Jeroboam that he would become the king of the northern tribes, He offered Jeroboam His blessings and the promise of an enduring dynasty. “You shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel. Then it shall be, *if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for*

you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you” (1 Kings 11:37-38).

With God’s help Jeroboam could have maintained the part of the empire God gave him. But his faith was in what he could see, not in God.

To secure his hold over the whole of his new kingdom, Jeroboam immediately built two capitals for his government at traditionally significant tribal rendezvous points. One was at Shechem, near Nablus in what is today called the West Bank region. The other was at Penuel, east of the Jordan River in modern-day Jordan.

Jeroboam then addressed what he considered a major problem, one that might wrest his kingdom from him. “Then Jeroboam said to himself, ‘Now the kingdom may well revert to the house of David. If this people continues to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, the heart of this people will turn again to their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah’” (1 Kings 12:26-27, NRSV).

Jeroboam changes Israel’s religion

To prevent such a development Jeroboam established a competing religious system. For political reasons—to maintain his hold on the northern tribes—he changed Israel’s forms of worshipping God.

Idolatry had already become popular during the last days of Solomon, so Jeroboam erected his own idols. “Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’ And he set up one in Bethel, and the other



Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III invaded the kingdom of Israel and carried thousands of its people away into captivity.

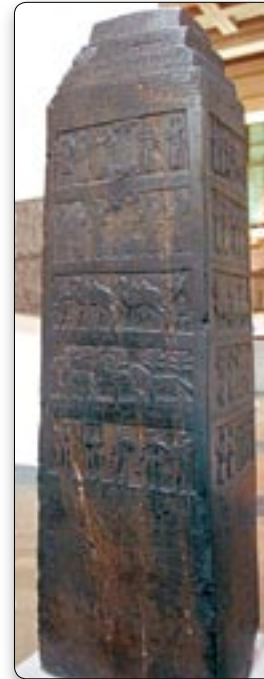
he put in Dan” (1 Kings 12:28-29).

Dan was in the far north of his kingdom. Bethel was in the south, just above the border with Judah and right on the major route people would travel while journeying to Jerusalem to worship.

Believing that observance of the same annual festivals as the Jews—the Holy Days of God (Leviticus 23)—would rekindle a desire for national unification, Jeroboam also changed the timing of the great fall festival (Leviticus 23:23-44) from the seventh to the eighth month (1 Kings 12:32-33).

He dismissed the Aaronic and Levitical priests (verse 31; 1 Kings 13:33), men set apart by God’s own decree (Exodus 40:15) to maintain the integrity of the nation’s religious life. To Jeroboam the Levitical priesthood was a threatening independent power base. The Levites inherited their office, owed the king nothing and were largely outside his control.

By dismissing the Levitical priests, Jeroboam established monarchical control of the nation’s religious life. As a result, many of the Levites moved to Judah, where they could continue to perform their divinely appointed functions (2 Chronicles 11:13-15).

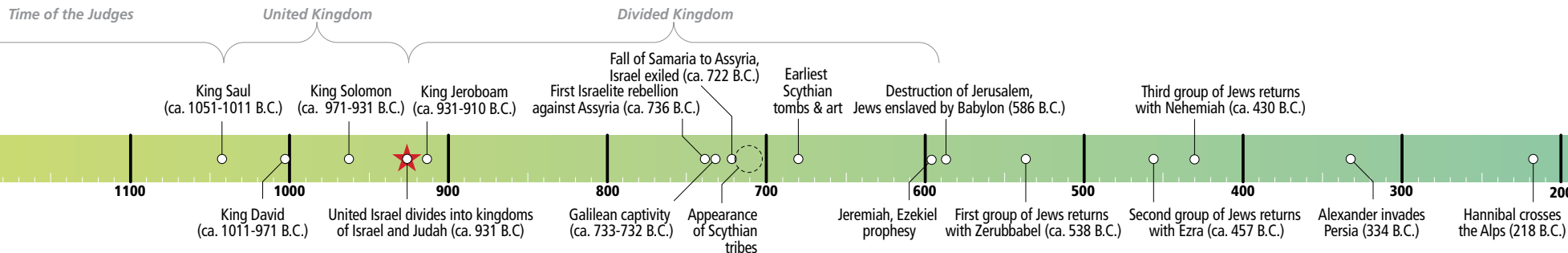


This obelisk records that many kingdoms—including Israel—paid tribute to Assyrian King Shalmaneser III.

In place of the Levites Jeroboam created a new priesthood of “the lowest” and least-experienced people (1 Kings 12:31; 13:33, KJV), men who owed the king all that they had and were. These appointees would have to cater to royal preferences to retain their positions.

Jeroboam introduced syncretism, a fusion of differing systems of belief. He combined aspects of God’s true religion with pagan beliefs and human rationalization. He may well have patterned many aspects

Photos: Scott Ashley



of his religious practices after the customs of Egypt and Tyre—Israel’s allies by treaty—to strengthen his relationship with these two major commercial and military supporters.

From that time forward the northern kingdom appeared to the outside world as merely an extension of the powerful coastal cities of the Phoenician Empire. They were commercial partners, shared a language and likely held similar religious views.

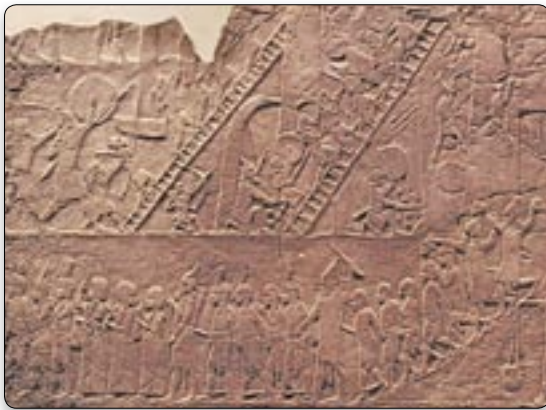
The distinction that God had originally intended between Israel and the surrounding nations was soon obliterated. So it is no wonder that historians have difficulty detecting Israel’s role in the region as anything other than traders with the coastal Phoenician cities. Israel was reduced to approximately equal status with the other kingdoms. Regrettably, it had forsaken its role as a spiritual light and example to the nations.

God’s response to Israel and Judah’s sins

Shortly after the inauguration of the new religious rituals and practices at Bethel and Dan, Ahijah the prophet, who had originally informed Jeroboam that he would become king, received another message from God:

“Go tell Jeroboam, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because I exalted you from among the people, made you leader over my people Israel, and tore the kingdom away from the house of David to give it to you; yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my sight, but you have done evil above all those who were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods, and cast images, provoking me to anger, and have thrust me behind your back; therefore, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam.

“I will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free in



Assyria was a harsh and cruel empire. Its kings recorded their conquests on stone reliefs such as these that lined their palace walls. Assyrian troops storm a city’s walls (left) while its defeated inhabitants begin their long march into exile. In another scene at right, scribes record plunder as livestock are driven away and exiles are carried away on ox carts to an uncertain future.

Israel, and will consume the house of Jeroboam, just as one burns up dung until it is all gone . . .” (1 Kings 14:7-10, NRSV).

Jeroboam’s reign had quickly gone terribly wrong. Sadly, his actions were merely in tune with the times. In the southern kingdom of Judah, King Rehoboam, whose mother was an Ammonite, did nothing to correct the idolatrous example Solomon had set in his old age. Many people in Judah likewise became ensnared in apostasy, turning from worshipping God (1 Kings 14:22-24).

It wasn’t long before the sins of Judah and Israel began to catch up with them. In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Pharaoh Shishak invaded Judah with 1,200 chariots, 60,000 horsemen and large numbers of infantry. Unprepared after so many years of relying on Egypt as an ally, Rehoboam panicked. The prophet Shemaiah brought this



message from God to Rehoboam’s court in Jerusalem: “You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak” (2 Chronicles 12:5, NRSV). The Bible records that the Egyptians demanded as tribute most of the golden treasures Solomon had made for the temple and his palace.

Shishak’s own account of this invasion is preserved on the walls of the temple he built with his plunder to honor his god Amun-Re in Karnak. He boasts of taking 150 towns, mostly in Judah’s Negev region and Israel’s north. Israel’s golden age under one monarch, and most of the golden treasures of the temple and king’s palace created during it, had disappeared.

However, the Scriptures note that Judah’s leaders admitted their guilt and humbled themselves before God. Such repentance wasn’t seen with the rulers of the northern 10 tribes. Therefore the northern kingdom was the first to go into captivity.

Because of Rehoboam’s change of heart God reduced the impact of Judah’s disaster. “They have humbled themselves; I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants, so that they may know the difference between

“serving me and serving the kingdoms of other lands” (2 Chronicles 12:7-8, NRSV).

Here is another important lesson about how God deals with His people. Even though they may repent, He does not necessarily take away all the consequences of their mistakes or rebellion against Him. But, if people sincerely humble themselves, He is often merciful, balancing out punishment and relief.

God does not throw temper tantrums; He does not impulsively blot out the objects of His wrath. His actions have purpose. First He attempts to deal with people in ways that will teach them lessons (Ezekiel 33:11). As we can see in many examples from the history of Israel and Judah, punishment is often His means of trying to change people’s attitudes.

God looks out for the long-term good of those with whom He is working (Hebrews 12:5-12). His ultimate goal, of course, is to bring everyone to repentance (2 Timothy 2:24-26; 2 Peter 3:9), to acknowledge Him and willingly choose to live according to His laws.

The approaching catastrophe

Because the northern kingdom followed Jeroboam’s leadership into idolatry, God warned the Israelites of the consequences of their rebellion: “The LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; *he will root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their ancestors,*

Are All Israelites Jews?

Today almost everyone identifies the name *Israel* with the Jews. Most people assume the Jewish people are the sole remaining descendants of the ancient nation of Israel. This assumption, however, is incorrect.

Technically the Jews are descendants of two of the Israelite tribes: *Judah* and *Benjamin*, plus a considerable part of a third, the priestly tribe of *Levi*.

Unknown to most, 10 other tribes in ancient Israel were *never* called Jews. These northern tribes were historically distinct and politically separate from the Jews, their brothers to the south who formed the *kingdom of Judah*, from which the term *Jew* was derived.

The northern coalition of tribes, the

kingdom or *house of Israel*, had already become an independent nation, separate from the house of Judah, by the time the word *Jew* first appears in the biblical narrative. In fact, the first time the term appears in the King James Version of the Bible, Israel was at *war* with the Jews (2 Kings 16:5-6).

Are all Israelites Jews? No. Jews—the citizens and descendants of the kingdom of Judah—are indeed Israelites, but not all Israelites are Jews. Since all 12 tribes, including Jews, are descendants of their father Israel (Jacob), we can apply the term *Israelite* to all of the tribes. The term *Jew*, however, is accurate only for the tribes that comprised the kingdom of Judah and for their descendants.

and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their sacred poles [idolatrous symbols associated with false worship], provoking the LORD to anger. He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and which he caused Israel to commit” (1 Kings 14:15-16, NRSV).

God dealt patiently with Israel, giving the people plenty of opportunities to repent. But over the course of the next two centuries the sins of the house of Israel and its kings increased. The Israelites drifted farther and farther from the covenant with their Creator that they had bound themselves to in the days of Moses.

God withdrew, in stages, His blessing and protection. “In those days the LORD began to *trim off* parts of Israel. Hazael [the Syrian king] defeated them throughout the territory of Israel: from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the Wadi Arnon, that is, Gilead and Bashan” (2 Kings 10:32-33, NRSV).

During the eighth century B.C. God’s prophets continued warning the Israelites that they, like the other kingdoms in the region, would fall victim to a new and powerful military presence. The westward expansion of Assyria soon began to seriously threaten the existence of the kingdom of Israel.

During this time of approaching disaster the writers of many of the books that would become the prophetic books of the Old Testament were at work. God sent prophet after prophet to warn the house of Israel and the house of Judah to repent. On a few occasions the leaders of Judah listened and instituted reforms that lasted for a while. But the northern kingdom never repented of the idolatrous practices Jeroboam had introduced. Its people refused to heed the warnings of the prophets.

The prophets of God repeated the same basic themes. They called for immediate repentance. They proclaimed the certainty of a coming captivity if the people refused to repent. They also consistently spoke of *the future of the people of Israel*, especially about the redemption and restoration of their descendants by the prophesied Messiah. (To understand the foundational concepts of biblical prophecy, be sure to request the booklet *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. A free copy is available from the office nearest you or through the literature library of our Web site at www.gnmagazine.org/booklets.)

The end of the northern kingdom

Shortly after the death of King Jeroboam II (ca. 753 B.C.), the northern kingdom plunged into political chaos. “Civil war, assassinations and

Were All the Israelites Deported?

Some scholars have challenged the Bible's claim that the entire population of the northern kingdom went into Assyrian captivity. Some think most of the Israelites fled south and assimilated into the population of the kingdom of Judah. What really happened? Let's examine the record.

The chain of events leading to Israel's fall and massive deportation began with the Assyrian monarch Tiglath-pileser III. In three campaigns he implemented what historians call the Gilead captivity (ca. 733-732 B.C.). He captured Damascus and established a military presence at the border of Egypt. He deported into the upper Mesopotamian River valley large segments of the Reubenite, Gaddite and Transjordan Manassite populations (1 Chronicles 5:26) and Naphtali and cities in the territories of Issachar, Zebulun and Asher (2 Kings 15:29).

The Assyrian monarch Shalmaneser V initiated and carried out most of the climactic 724-722 B.C. campaign into the remainder of the northern kingdom. Shalmaneser, however, "was deposed soon afterwards by another king, Sargon II. This name, 'True King,' seems to betray the suspect nature of Sargon's claim to the throne... Sargon II moved the Assyrian capital to his own foundation of Khorsabad, built in imitation of Nimrud, and the older city was neglected... Shalmaneser V... did not have time to commemorate his achievements in stone, and it was his successor, Sargon II, who claimed credit for the victory" (Julian Reade, *Assyrian Sculpture*, pp. 48, 65).

The landmark 19th-century discoveries of British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard dispelled any doubts that the Assyrian kingdom was a formidable force that ferociously dominated the ancient Near East off and on from the ninth through the seventh centuries B.C. It is indisputable that the Assyrians invaded and conquered the northern kingdom as part of that domination.

The precise figures involved, at least those outside the biblical record, are still beyond historical verification. Some scholars argue that only a small number of leaders—the northern intelligentsia—fell into captivity at the hands of the Assyrians. The rest, they say, either fled as refugees or were assimilated into the alien populations transplanted in the northern kingdom (2 Kings 17:24).

Others believe that the enslavement and removal of Israelites involved almost the entire northern population. How are we to know who is correct? How many Israelites did the Assyrians deport?

Archaeologists have found a set of Assyrian court records that provide some specific numbers. King Sargon II claims to have taken 27,290 captives from Samaria. This number is decidedly small in contrast to the entire population of the northern kingdom. But there is a logical reason for such a small number.

Conservative Bible scholar Eugene Merrill notes that Shalmaneser V "took Samaria in his last year... [then] Sargon, who probably was not the son of Tiglath-pileser, as some claim, but a usurper, reigned over the vast Assyrian Empire from 722 to 705. One of Assyria's most militant rulers, [Sargon] claims to have undertaken significant campaigns in every one of his seventeen years. In the annals of his first year he takes credit for Samaria's fall. In actual fact the biblical assertion that Shalmaneser V was responsible is correct; as several scholars have shown, Sargon claimed this major conquest for his own reign so that the record of his first year would not be blank" (*Kingdom of Priests*, 1996, p. 408).

Sargon took advantage of the fact that Shalmaneser V was deposed before his military exploits were fully recorded. Though Sargon may have accurately recorded the results of his own invasion and deportation of Israel's northern kingdom during his first year, he left *unrecorded* the much greater Israelite deportation by

his predecessor, leaving the impression that his own feats were greater than they actually were.

Eugene Merrill's logical explanation of Sargon's extremely low figures regarding deportees is significant because it squares Assyrian history with the biblical record. The relatively few thousands of deportees recorded by Sargon simply do not take into account the massive deportations already undertaken by his predecessors, Tiglath-pileser III and Shalmaneser V.

For any who believe in the accuracy of the Scriptures the biblical record is the most reliable historical source. In regard to the northern kingdom's deportation, the report of 2 Kings is probably the most essential biblical testimony: "Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; *there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone...* The LORD rejected *all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight...*"

"For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day" (2 Kings 17:18-23).

Although the Bible plainly states that the Assyrians carried the northern kingdom's population away as captives, biblical passages and indirect archaeological evidence indicate that some refugees from the northern tribes were living among the people of Judah well after Israel's fall.

Probably a few northerners moved south shortly after the separation of Israel from Judah in protest of the contemptible practices Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:25-33; 13:33; 2 Chronicles 11:13-16) and his successors—most notably Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 16:28-33; 18:3-4, 18)—introduced. This first wave of migrants into Judah would have been men and women seeking a less overtly polluted religious

environment in which to worship God.

But, just before the northern kingdom's exile, a much larger number of northerners probably headed south to Judah to escape the Assyrian onslaughts of the eighth century B.C. No one disputes that the population of Jerusalem expanded greatly during that time.

Do these events indicate that God simply assimilated enough people from the northern tribes into Judah and that the Jews who returned from the later Babylonian captivity under Ezra and Nehemiah comprised all that God intended to preserve as His holy people Israel? Some scholars advocate this theory, but they overlook a critical fact.

The Babylonians exiled the remaining inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. This exile included those who had migrated to Judah from the former northern kingdom. Seventy years later only a small portion of those Jews exiled to Babylon returned to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. The Scriptures show that those who volunteered to return and rebuild a Jewish presence in Palestine came almost exclusively from the tribes of *Judah, Benjamin and Levi* (Nehemiah 11:3-36). We find no scriptural evidence—or other historical evidence—that any significant numbers from the other 10 tribes were included in Judah's return to their homeland.

Therefore, the prophecies that refer to a future restoration of the lost 10 tribes *cannot* be considered fulfilled in the return of some of the Jewish people to Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Even those who did return comprised only a partial restoration of the Jews. The descendants of the rest of the exiled Jewish and Israelite families were scattered among the nations and most probably eventually lost their identity. Prophecy tells us that Christ will gather these, along with the lost 10 tribes, at His return.

internal fighting between groups which supported Assyrian policies or opposed any capitulation to them racked the northern state... The deaths of Jeroboam and Uzziah... came at the very moment when Assyria regained her power and renewed her push to the west" (Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, 1984, p. 312).

In the midst of their own domestic and internal difficulties, Israelite leaders had to consider the intrusions of Assyria into their affairs. By the time of Assyria's Tiglath-Pileser III, Israel's King Menahem (ca. 752-742 B.C.) had to pay enormous sums of tribute—protection money on a national scale—to induce the Assyrian monarch to leave him and his people in peace (2 Kings 15:19-20).

A few years later King Pekah (ca. 740-732 B.C.) rebelled against Assyria, only to be forced to surrender and pay a huge ransom to retain his throne (2 Kings 15:19-20). Pekah's disloyalty set in motion the first step in the Assyrians' policy of dealing with unruly peoples—turning the offending kingdom into a vassal state.

According to Assyria's foreign policy, those who would rebel a second time would forfeit their political control and be replaced by a vassal king whose loyalty the Assyrian government could count on. The Assyrians would also reduce the amount of territory the vassal would control, with the Assyrian monarch instituting his direct rule over at least some of the original kingdom.

A second rebellion would also trigger the deportation of significant numbers of the offending population. Finding themselves among strangers whose language they did not understand (Jeremiah 5:15) and whose land and culture were unfamiliar to them, the deportees would have little hope of successfully revolting against their Assyrian masters.

Tiglath-Pileser initiated these steps against the northern kingdom in response to King Pekah's alliance with Damascus, his second attempt to revolt (ca. 734 B.C.). The first deportation of Israelites (ca. 733-732 B.C.), sometimes referred to as the Galilean captivity, took part of the population



The Assyrian king Sargon II receives a report from an official, possibly one of his generals. Sargon took more than 27,000 Israelites captive into Assyria.

—principally drawn from the tribes of Naphtali, Reuben, Gad and the portion of Manasseh living east of the Jordan River—to northern Syria and northern and northwestern Mesopotamia (2 Kings 15:27-29; 1 Chronicles 5:26).

Tiglath-Pileser III also occupied the greater part of Galilee and Gilead and divided Israelite territory itself into four new provinces: Magid, Duru, Gilead and Samaria.

The last straw

Should a people rebel a third time, the official Assyrian response was firm and final: The nation would cease to exist. The Assyrian army would forcibly remove virtually the entire population into exile. The Assyrians would scatter the deportees throughout their empire and repopulate the vacated territories with people from distant and far-flung regions. Once removed from their homeland, and with their lands now settled by others, the scattered exiles would have less means or motivation to rebel against Assyrian control.

Assyrian soldiers demolish a walled city while its people are taken into captivity. Scenes like this were repeated throughout the kingdom of Israel.

A pro-Assyrian but unreliable Israelite vassal, King Hoshea (ca. 732-722 B.C.), set in motion

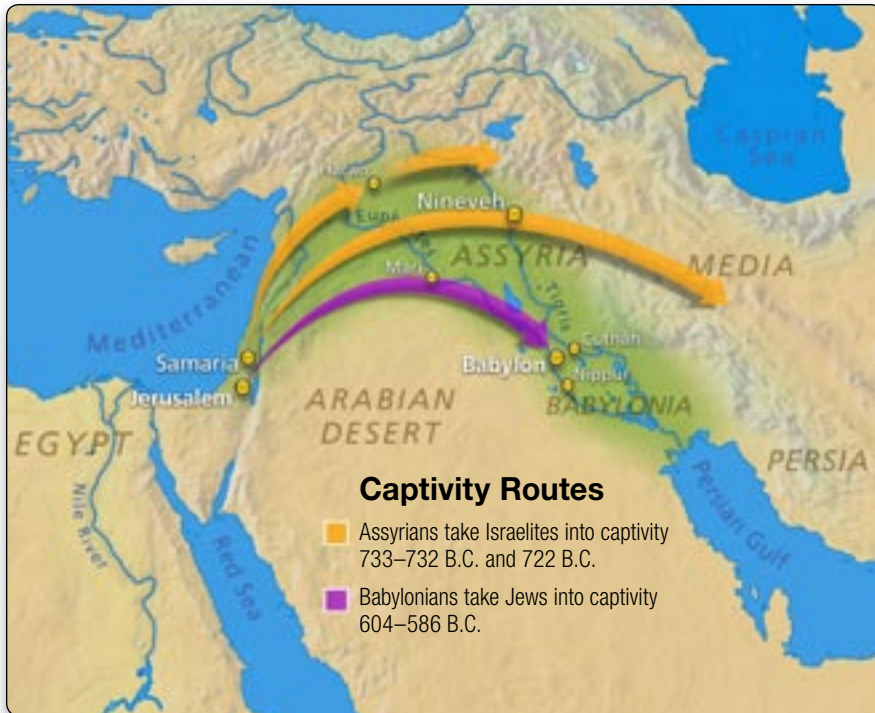
the events that brought the northern kingdom's dissolution. Hoping to receive critical aid from Egypt, to the south, Hoshea betrayed Assyrian trust around 724 B.C. (2 Kings 18:9-10). Shalmaneser V responded with a siege (ca. 724-722 B.C.) that resulted in the fall of Israel's capital city, Samaria. At that point the northern kingdom ceased to exist as a political entity.

History records a postscript to the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. Having successfully entered Israel's Promised Land via its victory over the northern kingdom, the Assyrians would soon return to attack the southern kingdom, Judah. In 701 B.C. the Assyrian army, led by Sennacherib, captured virtually all of Judah's fortified cities (2 Kings 18:9, 13-14) and deported thousands of Jews. Jerusalem, however, did not fall in this invasion, and the southern kingdom recovered sufficiently to last another 115 years before Babylon's armies conquered and destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Exiles disappear from history

With the extinction of the northern kingdom as a political entity, its people were divided and scattered beyond the Euphrates River in Assyria's eastern territories. God would now fulfill His promise to "sift the house of Israel among all nations" (Amos 9:9). Now the Israelites would experience what it was like to live under the rule of the other nations they had so much wanted to emulate.

God had warned them: "Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall *serve other gods*, which neither you nor your fathers have known; wood and stone. And among those nations *you shall find no rest*, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall *fear* day and night, and



Deported in a series of invasions at the hands of the Assyrians, the inhabitants of the kingdom of Israel would lose their identity in faraway lands. More than a century later the kingdom of Judah was likewise defeated and exiled by the Babylonians. However, unlike Israel, the Jews retained their identity, and many returned to their homeland after 70 years in exile.

Map by Shaun Venishi, photo by Scott Ashley

have no assurance of life" (Deuteronomy 28:64-66).

At this time they *disappeared from history* as the people of Israel. The Israelites had already begun to "serve other gods," having abandoned the religious practices that obviously distinguished them from other peoples. Among other things, they had abandoned the seventh-day Sabbath. God had proclaimed the Sabbath to Israel as "a sign between Me and you throughout your generations" (Exodus 31:13, 16-17; compare Ezekiel 20:12, 20).

Once their conquerors removed them from their homeland, they were merely refugees—part of the great mass of dislocated peoples the Assyrians had exiled. No longer did they possess outward characteristics that easily distinguished them from the peoples around them. Their obvious identifying signs quickly disappeared. But among their tribes fragments of their identity and culture would not so easily disappear.

How, then, can we find them? We need to look at the general region to which they were exiled and see if a people suddenly appeared in the region with characteristics that link them to the refugees of Israel's northern kingdom.

What we find is an amazing story, over many centuries, of God guiding displaced Israelites to the very region far to the north and west of their homeland that His prophets had foretold.



This six-sided clay prism, discovered in the ruins of the ancient Assyrian capital of Nineveh, records Sennacherib's 701 B.C. invasion of the kingdom of Judah after the kingdom of Israel had fallen. Judah survived this invasion, only to fall a little more than a century later to the Babylonian Empire.

The Mysterious Scythians Burst Into History

“Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,” says the LORD” (Amos 9:8).

When the northern kingdom of Israel suffered destruction at the hands of the Assyrians, its people found themselves forced into exile. Yet God had promised they would survive to become some of the world’s major powers in the last days. Where did they go from there? How can we find them?

Tracing the ancestry of ancient peoples is an extremely difficult task. Archaeologists, historians and distinguished professors in famous universities often differ on the interpretation of artifacts and historical documents.

This is because full knowledge of any ancient people’s origins is almost always clouded by the mists of time. This is especially true when written records have vanished, been destroyed or never existed. Therefore, to determine what happened to the ancient Israelites, we must

Although the geographic origins of the Scythian people are hotly debated, the Scythians suddenly appeared at the same time and near the same area of the Israelites’ disappearance.

carefully compare the available historical and archaeological evidence to the history and prophecies in the Bible.

Archaeologists and historical researchers have accumulated a substantial base of information we can fit together as pieces of the historical puzzle. The more pieces on the table, the easier it is to accurately connect the information. By assembling enough parts we can obtain a reasonably good picture of the past.

Key historical clues

Historians accept that most of the ancestors of today’s Western democracies once lived as nomadic tribes roaming the vast grassland plains of antiquity known as the Eurasian steppes. One particular group of these migratory peoples, identified as *Scythians* by the Greeks, suddenly appeared on the Eurasian steppes about the same time the 10 tribes of Israel disappeared from history. Is there a connection? Here are some of

the more pertinent facts and discoveries concerning the two peoples.

The vast Eurasian steppes stretch some 4,350 miles from the base of the Carpathian Mountains in Europe to Mongolia in eastern Asia. They formed a single geographic unit of natural grassland that every spring was transformed into spectacular seas of wildflowers stretching as far as the eye could see.

This vast plain was perfectly suited to ranching and grain-raising. Archaeologists have discovered ample evidence to prove that, in antiquity, nomadic tribes regularly traversed it while following grazing herds and

flocks in great cyclical routes during the spring, summer and fall.

However, climatic changes about 2,000 years ago turned large sections of the central-Asian steppes into a desert waste. It became so dry that it could no longer support the pastoral way of life practiced from 2,700 to 2,100 years ago (Tamara Talbot Rice, *The Scythians*, 1961, p. 33).

The Scythians’ sudden appearance

Some modern scholars suggest three theories to explain the sudden and mysterious appearance of the Scythians in the steppe region adjacent to the Black Sea. Some believe they migrated there from the north, others from the east. A third opinion suggests the migrations came from the south.

Although the geographic origins of the Scythian people are hotly debated, evidence for the *time* of their first appearance in history is not. They suddenly appeared at the same time and near the same area of the Israelites’ disappearance.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says: “The Scythians were a people who during the 8th-7th centuries BC moved from Central Asia to southern Russia” (15th edition, Vol. 16, macropaedia, “Scythians,” p. 438). The *Encyclopedia Americana* explains that the Scythians first occupied the territory around the Black Sea around 700 B.C. and that, from their first beginnings, they presented a “cohesive political entity” (Vol. 24, 2000 edition, “Scythians,” p. 471).

Historian Tamara Talbot Rice confirms that “the Scythians did not



Far from being barbarians, the Scythians and Celts were accomplished craftsmen, as demonstrated by this beautifully detailed Scythian comb made of solid gold.

become a recognizable national entity much before the eighth century B.C. ... By the seventh century B.C. they had established themselves firmly in southern Russia ... And analogous tribes, *possibly even related clans*, though politically entirely distinct and independent, were also centred on the Altai [where the eastern border of Russia meets the western border of Mongolia and China] ...

“Assyrian documents place their appearance there [between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea] in the time of King Sargon (722-705 B.C.), a date which closely corresponds with that of the establishment of the first group of Scythians in southern Russia” (Rice, pp. 19-20, 44). This date also corresponds with the disappearance of the captives from Israel’s northern kingdom.

The Geography of Celtic-Scythian Commerce

The trading patterns of the Celts of forested Northwestern Europe and the Scythians of the eastern plains is revealing. The highways of trade and travel in antiquity were the rivers and seas. Celts and Scythians were adept at traveling the waterways.

Neighboring peoples regarded the Saka Scythians who lived by the Caspian Sea as great fishermen. They were prodigious consumers of fish. As a result, some of them were called the Apa-saca, meaning the water Saca.

To the west the Celtic Veneti tribe had become a maritime power with more than 220 large oak vessels—whose cross timbers were a foot wide and secured by iron spikes as thick as a man’s thumb. Their stronghold was in the western French peninsula of Brittany on Quiberon Bay. According to Roman sources, the Veneti traded not only along the coasts of Gaul, but for tin with Britain and Ireland.

Both Celts and Scythians exhibited exceptional skill in river and naval navigation, even as early as the last half of the first millennium B.C. Both groups had been deeply involved in river and sea commerce from the beginning of their appearance on the Eurasian steppes.

Archaeology and history reveal a great deal

about Celtic and Scythian ethnic identity as exhibited in their trading activities and relationships. To understand the nature of their relationships we must understand certain geographical features of the steppe region.

Europe is shaped like a huge peninsula. In peninsular Europe, above the Mediterranean world, is what could be called a hub, or nexus, where the headwaters of its major rivers—the Rhine, Danube, Seine and Rhône—all come close together.

This hub was once a key link to the communication and trade flowing between the Atlantic, Nordic-Baltic, eastern Black Sea and Mediterranean trading zones. It was a major gateway to all of Europe.

From the Rhine River additional arteries branched off to the east in central Europe to wind up the river valleys of the Lippe, Ruhr and Main or northward along the Weser and Elbe. Another major pathway, critical to the precious amber trade, started at the sources for amber on the Baltic Sea shore in the Jutland Peninsula and adjacent areas.

This trade route extended south across the central German plain through Bohemia to where it intersected with the Danube near

During the late eighth century B.C., records from the Caucasian kingdom of Urartu, which controlled the northern reaches of the Euphrates River, also noted the appearance of a group called *Cimmerians*.

The book *From the Lands of the Scythians* explains: “... Two groups, Cimmerians and Scythians, seem to be referred to in Urartean and Assyrian texts, but it is not always clear whether the terms indicate two distinct peoples or simply mounted nomads ... Beginning in the second half of the eighth century B.C., Assyrian sources refer to nomads identified as the Cimmerians; other Assyrian sources say these people were present in the land of the Mannai [or Mannea, south of Lake Urmia] and in Cappadocia for a hundred years [that is, about 750 to 650 B.C.], and record their advances into Asia Minor and Egypt.

modern Vienna. From there it continued down the Danube to the Greek trading posts on the shores of the Black Sea. The Black Sea was the major trading hub at the eastern end of this route.

These waterways provided direct access to most of Eastern Europe and the Baltic region. The eastern branch of Scythians, residing around the Caspian Sea, also had direct access to the Baltic Sea via the Volga River.

The Volga was navigable past present-day Moscow. As Thor Heyerdahl, an ethnographer famous for his work on other ancient migration routes, has pointed out, the headwaters of the Volga are tantalizingly close to the headwaters of the Dvina, which empties into the Baltic at Riga.

In other words, both the eastern Scythians and the western Celts had the waterways of the continent—the “highways” of that day—at their disposal for trade. And they used them effectively. They were far from being a backward



Celts and Scythians freely interacted through trading and travel networks reaching from the Caspian Sea to the Atlantic Ocean.

Deep penetrating rivers like the Dniester and the Dnieper led far into Eastern Europe, where a short portage could connect a traveler or migrant with the Dvina or the Vistula rivers.

people limited to a simple nomadic life. (For more information, be sure to read “Celts and Sythians Linked by Archaeological Discoveries,” page 63.)

“The Assyrians used Cimmerians in their army as mercenaries; a legal document of 679 B.C. refers to an Assyrian ‘commander of the Cimmerian regiment’; but in other Assyrian documents they are called ‘the seed of runaways who know neither vows to the gods nor oaths’” (Boris Piotrovsky, 1975, pp. 15, 18).

Historian Samuel Lysons spoke of “the Cimmerians seeming to be the same people as the Gauls or Celts under a different name” (John Henry and James Parker, *Our British Ancestors: Who and What Were They?*, 1865, pp. 23, 27).

Anne Kristensen, a respected Danish linguistic scholar, recently reached the conclusion that the Cimmerians (who later became known as the Celts) can positively be identified as the deported Israelites. In the beginning of her research Dr. Kristensen was skeptical and subscribed to the traditional theory that the Cimmerians were “Aryan” tribes the Scythians had chased out of the north, as Herodotus had theorized.

But as she dug more and more into the Assyrian sources, she found the Cimmerians first appeared in history in 714 B.C. in the region of Iran south of Armenia where the kings of Assyria had settled many of the deported Israelites. She came to the conclusion that the *Gimira*, or *Cimmerians*, represented at least a part of the lost 10 tribes of Israel.

Dr. Kristensen writes: “There is scarcely reason, any longer, to doubt the exciting and verily astonishing assertion propounded by the students of the Ten Tribes that the Israelites deported from Bit Humria, of the House of ‘Omri, are identical with the Gimirraja of the Assyrian sources. Everything indicates that Israelite deportees did not vanish from the picture but that, abroad, under new conditions, they continued to leave their mark on history” (*Who Were the Cimmerians, and Where Did They Come From? Sargon II, the Cimmerians, and Rusa I*, translated from the Danish by Jørgen Læssøe, The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, No. 57, 1988, pp. 126-127).

It is also worth noting that Assyrian crown prince Sennacherib wrote a secret intelligence report that archaeologists found during the excavation of the royal archives at Nineveh. Sennacherib’s report passed on news from his spies that Cimmerian nomads had invaded Urartu and had defeated their forces. On the strength of that report the Assyrians made preparations to invade their northern rival, Urartu, which they successfully accomplished in 714 B.C.

A Scythian tribal alliance emerges

But in the end it was the Scythians who profited most from the conflicts that weakened Urartu. By 700 B.C. the Scythians had gained control over

the territory of the old Urartean kingdom. There they formed a tribal alliance the Greeks called the *Scythian Kingdom*.

Using the central Kreuzberg Pass (also known as the Caucasus Gate), the Scythians mastered crossing the steep Caucasus Mountains. The pass was passable most of the year; it was relatively ice-free even though its elevation is higher than many passes in the Alps. The Scythians had a remarkable ability to move large armies back and forth through the pass. In antiquity it was even known as the “Scythian route.”

Celts and Scythians Linked by Archaeological Discoveries

The Celtic Hallstatt culture and the Scythian Vekerzug or Thracian culture are excellent examples that show how closely these two peoples interacted with one another. Historians and archaeologists label the people who established the Hallstatt Culture (700-450 B.C.) as either proto-Celts or just plain Celts. The culture, as represented by the grave goods of the Hallstatt aristocracy, is remarkably universal and distinct.

The Hallstatt Celts were innovative metal workers. Their iron weapons provided them with a distinct military advantage. Like the Scythians, they also brought with them an improved breed of horses that could run faster with great stamina in comparison to the horses already in northern-central Europe, giving them greater mobility.

Many of the richest Hallstatt burial places contain sturdy four-wheeled wagons that show a significant technical competency. Their spoke wheels were fitted with iron tires shrunken and nailed around the composite wooden rims. Their wooden yokes were decorated by patterns of bronze nail heads.

These artifact-rich sites seem to have been initially concentrated from the area of the Upper Danube to Bohemia. Later in the 500s B.C., however, the Celts’ Hallstatt cultural zone of control expanded to the west.

Significantly, vehicle burials were also a

distinctive trademark of the Scythian culture. The late eighth and seventh centuries B.C. were a time of disruption and change not only at the headwaters of the Danube, but also in the Black Sea and Caucasus regions, where there were migrating tribes of Scythians.

The Hallstatt Celts’ lifestyle had many similarities to that of the Scythians. A Hallstatt sword in Vienna’s Natur-Historisches Museum has ornamentation that shows a Celt wearing profusely decorated trousers. This is comparable to the Scythian dress as pictured on the Chertomlyk vase (from the Black Sea area). This Vienna sword also depicts a tailcoat strikingly similar to Eastern Scythian apparel found by Russian archaeologists at Katanda in the southern Altai (Siberia). Another Celtic sword found at Port Bern, Switzerland, was stamped during its manufacture with a decoration of two standing horned animals flanking a tree of life—a classic Near Eastern, Scythian theme.

The archaeological evidence shows that the Celts and Scythians both freely shared and mingled. Russian and Eastern European excavations plainly reveal the blending of these two groups.

Most scholars also agree that it is evident that the Scythians of Eastern Europe maintained close relations with the Scythians still on the steppes in the east and the Hallstatt–La Tène Celts in the west.

The Label *Celt* and Celtic Society

Scholars find a logical explanation for how the word *Celt*, in reference to the western branch of the steppe people, originated. Some conclude that the ethnic label *Celt* is another form of the Goidelic Irish word *ceilt*, which means “concealment” or “hidden.” The Scottish word *kilt* is of a similar derivation.

This fits the Celts’ strongly held religious prohibition against setting in writing their folk traditions, knowledge and understanding. The traditions were to be communicated only orally, and we can be sure the purpose of the prohibition was not to cover illiteracy. Many Celts spoke and wrote Greek and used it in private and public business. But they staunchly refused to divulge to outsiders any

information about their most revered beliefs and traditions.

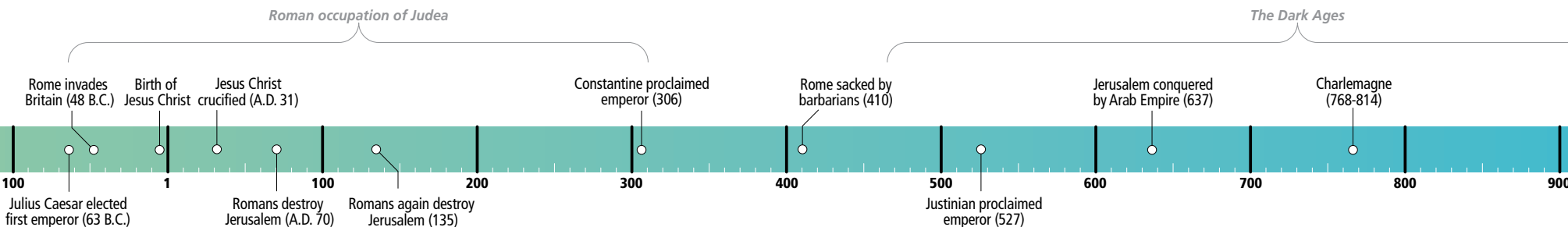
Even Julius Caesar, during his invasion of Gaul, could only marvel at this strong Celtic religious prohibition. Some scholars conclude the word *keltoi*, or Celt, is an appropriate label for people who kept much about their past and traditions hidden.

In spite of the Celts’ characteristic secrecy, enough history was recorded for us to come to the conclusion that the Celts and Scythians came from a common Israelite heritage. Their migrations had taken them in different directions.

In the end, however, these descendants would find themselves together again in Europe.

Before their exile the 10 Israelite tribes of the north would have been fully aware of the kingdom of Urartu and its strategic location. Why? Because in the first half of the eighth century B.C. the northern kingdom of Israel, before its captivity, was heavily invested in export-import trade, and Urartu was a key to that trade. Urartu had made an alliance with the small states of northern Syria that bordered on the territory of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II.

Many of those Aramaeans had been allied with King Pekah during his invasion of Judah around 735 B.C. During that time the Urartians had gained the strategic domination of the Euphrates down to its western bend, allowing them to control the main trade route to the Mediterranean from the southern Caucasus. Archaeological excavations in Urartu have uncovered artifacts from Egypt, Assyria and Persia as well as from the Mediterranean region.



Scythian origins

The term *Scythic*, wrote historian George Rawlinson, was originally more the designation of a *way of life* than a reference to blood relationships. He explained that the term was “applied by the Greeks and Romans to Indo-European and Turanian races indifferently,” providing that their habits and customs conformed to the nomadic way of life (George Rawlinson, *Seven Great Monarchies*, Vol. 3, 1884, p. 11).

Today, however, historians use the term *Scythian* mostly in reference to the *Saka*, or *Sacae*, Scyths. These people became the leading tribes of the Scythian culture. They inspired its dynamic way of life and its political, artistic, economic and social leadership. From the seventh century B.C. forward, it was the Saka, or Sacae, tribes that defined what it meant to be Scythian from the Black Sea all the way to the mountains of Mongolia.

Before the early 20th century, European and American historians assumed the Scythians were of the Mongol people from Asia. Modern anthropological research, however, has shown this idea to be false. Most scholars are convinced that no ethnic links exist between the Saka Scythians and the Mongols or the Slavic peoples.

However, this doesn’t mean the scattered former tribes on the Eurasian steppes—the peoples the Greeks first labeled Scythians before the eighth century B.C.—all suddenly disappeared. Rather, the Saka Scyths simply began to dominate the steppe region from 700 to 500 B.C. During that time the Saka Scyths—accompanied by a smaller mixture of other tribes of Middle Eastern origin such as displaced Medes, Elamites and Assyrians—became the predominant peoples on the Eurasian plains.

In fact, until sometime in the fifth or fourth century B.C. the predominant inhabitants of even western Siberia were “a fair-haired people of European origin, and . . . it was after that date that an influx of Mongoloids resulted in a very mixed type of population” (Rice, p. 77). Close examination of 20th-century archaeological discoveries plainly and consistently portray the Saka Scythians as physically like the present-day people of Europe.

Links to biblical prophecy

Let's compare what we have learned about the Scythians to the promises God made to the exiled Israelites. Addressing them as the "house of Isaac" (Amos 7:16), He promised that during their captivity they would not be destroyed as a people (Amos 9:8, 14; compare Hosea 11:9; 14:4-7). Instead He promised to *greatly multiply* them after their exile (Hosea 1:10) and show them loving-kindness and mercy because of His covenant.

The Scriptures plainly tell us that the Israelites, after the Assyrians forcibly deported them from their homeland, relocated "in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan [in northern Assyria], and in the cities of the Medes" (2 Kings 18:11). This is not far from the region of Urartu, between the Black and Caspian seas, where the Scythians had established a temporary kingdom.

Prophecies of Israel's Resettlement in Northwestern Europe

Many biblical scholars consider Amos, a prophet from Tekoa in northern Judah, to be the first to warn of the impending exile of "the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15). But Amos also told Israel it would not be entirely lost from God's view. "Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it [the kingdom of Israel] from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," says the LORD. "For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground" (Amos 9:8-9).

The Israelites would indeed be sifted among other nations. They first would be compelled to join scores of other ethnic groups in a cruel exodus from their homeland. Where would they be forced to go? "For the Lord will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River..." (1 Kings 14:15, NASB)—a river to their north.

These prophecies show that the exiled Israelites would be unable to remain in one

cohesive group. They would scatter—break up into smaller units—and have to share their land of exile with other peoples.

In other passages the prophets reveal that these Israelites would eventually find themselves in a new location to the north and west of the Promised Land, from which they faced imminent eviction. It is from this direction they will return to their homeland in the Middle East after Christ's return.

The most obvious verse that shows this is in the book of Isaiah: "Surely these shall come from afar; look! Those from the north and the west, and these from the land of Sinim" (Isaiah 49:12; see also verses 13-23).

Since Hebrew has no expression corresponding to the English "northwest," this verse may also be understood that Israel would migrate to a region to the northwest of the Promised Land.

But there are other biblical clues. One is Hosea 12:1: "Ephraim feeds on the wind, and pursues the east wind." This expression implies Ephraim would migrate to the west (compare Hosea 11:9-10).

Other passages suggest that Israel would

Through Hosea God had foretold that the Israelites would become "wanderers among the nations" (Hosea 9:17). This explains why the exiled Israelites seem to have vanished as a people. They didn't really vanish; they simply reappeared in history under new names—as a vagabond people, separated into independent clans, wandering over the Eurasian plains.

Obviously no one could any longer identify them as citizens of their former Middle Eastern kingdom. So they acquired a new identity. Only their old subtribal, or clan, names remained mostly the same. Those names have proven to be important in preserving their identity as the lost 10 tribes of Israel. (Be sure to read "Linguistic Links: What's in a Name?," page 68.)

The Sythian-Celtic connection

At the same general time the Scythians burst on the scene around



the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn. Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock'" (Jeremiah 31:9-10).

Other references to an island or maritime location include Isaiah 24:15; 41:1, 5; 51:5; 66:19 and Psalm 89:25. Collectively, these passages indicate that the captive Israelites would eventually move on from their land

Biblical prophecies indicate that the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel would eventually settle in an area to the northwest of their Middle Eastern homeland.

ultimately be scattered and found in an island setting. After Jesus' return "they shall come with weeping, and with supplications I [God] will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the

of exile in northern Mesopotamia to ultimately settle in Northwestern Europe—the major maritime and coastal region north and west of their Middle Eastern homeland.

the Black Sea, another civilization was emerging to the west in Europe. In his book *The Ancient World of the Celts* historian Peter Ellis notes: “At the start of the first millennium BC, a civilisation which had developed from its Indo-European roots around the headwaters of the Rhine, the Rhône and the Danube suddenly erupted in all directions through Europe. Their advanced use of metalwork, particularly their iron weapons, made them a powerful and irresistible force. Greek merchants, first encountering them in the sixth century BC, called them Keltai and Galatai ... Today we generally identify them as Celts” (1999, p. 9).

Considerable evidence connects the Celts of Europe with the *Cimmerians* who fled from the Near East to Asia Minor at the time the armies of Babylon were conquering the Assyrian Empire. From Asia Minor the Cimmerians migrated by way of the Danube River into

Linguistic Links: What’s in a Name?

What can we learn from names? What we call ourselves defines for others who we are. We’re also defined by the labels others apply to us (whether factual or fabricated), the name of the land in which we live or were born and the name of the land of our ancestry. We must consider names and labels as we attempt to trace the people of Israel through history.

In the Bible the people of Israel are sometimes called the *sons of Isaac*. God promised that the name of Isaac would continue to identify Israel as a people (Genesis 21:12).

In biblical times the Hebrew language was written with no vowels. Thus *Isaac* would have been spelled simply *Sk* or *Sc* in the English equivalents of the Hebrew characters. We should not consider it astonishing that shortly after the exile of the 10 tribes the term *SaCae* (the letters for the name Isaac with the Latin plural ending “ae”) identified the new settlers in the Black Sea region of Scythia.

The Assyrians similarly spoke of the emergence of the *iShKuza* and the Persian-Medians of the *SaKa*, both derivations of the name Isaac. (We have capitalized the S,

C and K in these examples to help you see their derivations.)

The Behistun Rock, a mural carved in stone near present-day Bisitun, Iran, provides linguistic clues to the understanding of several ancient languages. The rock relief dates from the reign of Darius I of Persia (ca. 522-486 B.C.). Its depiction of conquered foreign kings paying homage was inscribed in the Old Persian, Elamite (Susian) and Babylonian languages. One sees Skuka, king of the temporarily subjugated Asiatic branch of Scythians, pictured as the last one in line. The Behistun Rock describes him as the king of the *Scythians*, *Saka* or *Cimmerians* (pronounced “Gimiri” in Babylonian).

The Greek historian Herodotus (484-420 B.C.) wrote that the Persians called Scythians “*Sacae*.” Later the Greek writer Ptolemy (A.D. second century) referred to the *Sacae* as “*Saxones*.” These terms were often used synonymously.

British historian Sharon Turner tells us: “The Saxons [who migrated to the British Isles] were a... Scythian tribe; and of the various Scythian nations... the Sakai, or Sacae, are the people from whom the descent

Europe, where they became known as the Celts. Many historians have concluded that the Celts and Scythians have a common background.

The Greeks and Romans called all people beyond the northern boundaries of the old Roman Republic and the Greek city-states *barbarians*. They used the term to describe foreigners who dared challenge their political and cultural leadership, regardless of how educated or technologically advanced they might have been. These people represented many extended-family clans known by a variety of names. Among them, no doubt, were clans of unrelated ethnic origin that had fled from eastern territories of the old Assyrian Empire at about the same time.

But the more significant fact is that many, if not most, of these so-called barbarian tribes *were racially and culturally related*. For that reason we should expect that the language of these related tribes could be traced to a common parent language—and that is exactly what we find.

of the Saxons may be inferred, with the least violation of probability. Sakai-Suna or the sons of the Sakai, abbreviated into Saksun, which is the same sound as Saxon, seems a reasonable etymology of the word Saxon” (*The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, Vol. 1, 1840, p. 59).

What is the origin of the name *Cimmerian*? The Assyrian conquerors of the northern 10 tribes called them *Bit Khumri* (or *Ghomri*),

Romans labeled them *Celts*, *Galli*, *Gallus* and *Galates* (*Galatians*). The Hellenistic and Roman conquerors (300 B.C.–A.D. 200) renamed the area of Gilead, once home of the exiled Israelite tribes of Gad, Reuben and half of Manasseh, *Gaulanitis*.

Curiously, the term *Gaul*, whether *gallo* or *gallus* in Latin, *galler* or *waller* in Celtic, *waller* or *walah* in German or *gaullois* in French, seems to carry the same meaning: “stranger,

In the Bible the people of Israel are sometimes called the sons of Isaac. God promised that the name of Isaac would continue to identify Israel as a people.

meaning the *House of Omri*. Omri was one of the most militarily successful kings of the kingdom of Israel; he founded his own dynasty of kings. Inscriptions of the time refer to the Israelite kingdom as the land or house of Omri. In Greek we find the forms *Kimmerii*, *Kimmeroi* and *Cymry* and, in Latin, *Kimbri*, *Kymbrians* and *Cimbres* as the equivalents of the Assyrian *Khumri*.

Later history records the migration to Europe of *Celtic* tribes bearing these names, some into Jutland and others into Gaul. The *Gauls* called themselves *Kymris*, but the

traveler or exile.” To the Celts the words Gael and *Scythe* both meant “stranger” or “traveler.” God had told the 10 tribes of Israel they would become *wanderers* (Hosea 9:17).

When we understand that the Hebrew for “carried captive,” as used in describing the Assyrian deportation of the Israelites out of Gilead into exile, is the word *galah* and its modern derivatives are *galut*, *galo* or *gallo*, we have come full circle. This linguistic journey ties together a few of the many labels applied to the exiled 10 tribes as the “House of Omri” and the “Sons of Isaac.”

The language link

Languages are identified by families. The language family common to the Northwestern European people falls within what is classified as the *Germanic* branch of *Indo-European* languages. The history of the Indo-European language family provides us with excellent clues to the relationships between the barbarian tribes that engendered the Northwestern European democracies.

When we look at the nations of Europe, we see delineated nation-state boundaries with distinctly different languages such as English, French, Danish and Swedish as well as localized dialects (such as High and Low German). However, in the days of these so-called barbarians such obvious distinctions did not exist. The people settling Northwestern Europe at that time spoke mainly different dialects of the same parent language.

English is part of the Indo-European family of languages that is usually broadly labeled as *Teutonic* or *Germanic*. But such labeling does not imply that the modern German language (*German*) is the parent language or that the German people came from the same ethnic stock as the Scythians. To the contrary, modern German is only one branch of the original parent language. The same is true of the English, Danish, Dutch and Scandinavian languages. All are branches of one original language.

As Cambridge University professor H. Munro Chadwick explains: “Down to the fifth century the German, English and Scandinavian languages differed but slightly from one another ... In the fifth and following centuries differentiation took place very quickly within the northwestern group. English developed in general on lines about midway between German and Scandinavian, but with many special features of its own. Frisian [Dutch] seems to have differed little from English for a long time ... The differentiation of the languages was obviously governed by their geographical position” (*The Nationalities of Europe and the Growth of National Ideologies*, 1966, p. 145).

If we go back 500 years from the point when the Teutonic languages began to differentiate, we discover that great swaths of northern, western and eastern Europeans spoke similar dialects of a common Indo-European language. When scholars try to pin a label on a particular European barbarian tribe as being Germanic or Celtic or Scythian, they often find themselves in a quandary: Distinctions are often unclear and can easily become arbitrary.

The ancient Romans rarely bothered to learn barbarian languages, preferring to use interpreters. They couldn't tell the difference between the language spoken in Gaul and that spoken on the other side of the Rhine. So Latin writers habitually began to label barbarian tribes east of the Rhine as the “Germani,” lumping them into one group.

Some modern archaeologists, however, describe the dominant people of Northern Europe during the period ca. 500 B.C. as broadly divided between Celts and Scytho-Teutons. Even this distinction was more geographic and cultural than ethnic.

The farther back in history we go the less distinction we find between the Celtic and Teutonic peoples who settled Western and Northwestern Europe. Professor Chadwick writes: “In any discussion as to the origin of the Teutonic (or Germanic) languages it must of course be borne in mind that these languages are merely a branch of the Indo-European languages ... and consequently that their original home—as distinct from the area in which they acquired their special characteristics—was that of the whole Indo-European family. The same remark applies to the Celtic languages ... No one doubts that these languages, or rather the parent language from which they are derived, were once limited to a much smaller area than that of their present distribution” (Chadwick, p. 157).

These people burst into view along the edge of the old Assyrian Empire in the last half of the eighth century B.C.—at the same time and in the same area where the lost 10 tribes of Israel disappeared. Until about the fourth century A.D. their dialects of a common language remained similar enough for them to easily communicate with each other.

Scythians and Celts are closely related by language. But were the Celts a distinct people unrelated to the Scythians? Or are there indications of a strong relationship between them?

Scythian-Celtic interaction

Historians and archaeologists report that during the second half of the first millennium B.C. the area of Europe north of the Mediterranean world shared two related cultures. From the British Isles to the headwaters of the Danube to the eastern fringe of the Alps existed what historians label as the Hallstatt Celtic culture and, later, the La Tène Celtic culture.

But further east, occupying a vast area of Eastern Europe, was the strong horse-centered traditional Scythic culture based on a way of life suited to grasslands rather than mountains and forests. Each of these provided ideas and inspiration for the other. According to the archaeological evidence, the two groups freely intermarried.

The separate Celtic and Scythian cultures interacted with each other much like modern Britain and America. Each was adapted to the geography of its own region. But the people themselves interacted as if they shared an ancestry. Archaeologists have uncovered some remarkable sites of Celtic and Scythian cultures that demonstrate how closely the two peoples worked with each other (see “The Geography of Celtic-Scythian Commerce,” page 60).

The distinction between Scythian and Celtic cultures is probably best explained by two factors. First, the geography supporting each culture was generally different. But, equally important, 10 Israelite tribes were exiled from the Middle East. Each of these had its own culture within the larger culture of Israel's northern kingdom. Also, each tribe was further subdivided into clans (1 Samuel 10:19; compare Exodus 6:14-25, NIV).

Therefore, one would expect these exiled Israelite tribes to continue exhibiting some cultural differences in the lands of their exile. Such distinctions would also explain the clans and subclans existing among the Scythians and Celts.

Israeli Talmudic scholar Yair Davidy, in his book *The Tribes: The Israelite Origins of Western Peoples*, presents convincing evidence that the displaced Israelites retained their sub-tribal clan names during and after their captivity. "Proofs adduced," he writes, "are derived from Biblical, Talmudic, Historical, Archaeological, and Linguistic sources as well as Folklore, Mythology, National Symbols, and National Characteristics" (1993, p. xiv). As a resident of Jerusalem, Mr. Davidy had access to the historical and biblical sources on the shelves of Jerusalem's National Library.

Tribal and subtribal names, he points out, are a key to tracing the Israelites' wanderings. In his introduction he summarizes his conclusion: "*The Tribes*' produces evidence that most of the ancient Israelites assimilated to foreign cultures and forgot their origins. In the course of time they reached the British Isles and north-west Europe whence related nations (such as the U.S.A.) were founded" (ibid.).

For thorough coverage of this aspect of Israel's migratory history, we refer you directly to his books *The Tribes: The Israelite Origins of Western Peoples* (1993), *Joseph: The Israelite Destiny of America* (2001) and *Ephraim: The Gentile Children of Israel* (2001).

Between 200 B.C. and A.D. 500 enemy tribes and drastic climatic changes drove the Scythian clans from the Eurasian steppes to the northern and western regions of Europe. For another 1,000 years the former Scythians were alternately allies and enemies in feudal Europe under a variety of clan names. This lasted until modern nations as we know them began to take shape in Europe.

In the next chapter we pick up the amazing story of the scattered descendants of ancient Israel rising to the international prominence that God had long ago promised to the offspring of Joseph.

Britain and the United States Inherit Joseph's Birthright

"And the LORD has declared... that he will set you in praise, fame and honor high above all the nations... as he promised"
(Deuteronomy 26:18-19, NIV).

After about five centuries of existence on the Eurasian steppes following the destruction of the northern kingdom, Israel's nomadic descendants, now called Scythians, began another forced migration.

This time their enemies—from Asia and the Near East—and a dramatic change of climate on the Eurasian steppes began moving them westward, just as the biblical prophets had said would happen (1 Kings 14:15; Isaiah 49:12; Hosea 12:1). This major westward migration began about 200 B.C. and continued into the fifth century A.D.

Yet during this time, in the first century, when Christianity was

Joseph's modern descendants are the easiest to identify of all the lost tribes of Israel because the specific blessings they were to receive stand out so distinctly from those of the other tribes.

in its infancy, the Jewish historian Josephus confirmed that many deported Israelites were still living beyond the Euphrates River. Josephus wrote that, in his day, "the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now [the first century], and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI, Chapter V, Section 2).

The apostle James also plainly confirms that the missing tribes hadn't been reunited with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in Palestine. He addresses his epistle "to the twelve tribes *which are scattered abroad*" (James 1:1).

Though God had promised that all of the lost 10 tribes of Israel would continue to exist, He also promised to *sift them among the nations* (Amos 9:9). This He did until He brought them to the land that was *north and west* of ancient Israel, where He had promised to resettle them.

It was as though a powerful, unseen hand inexorably herded them—

with all their tribes and clans—across the Eurasian plains, the Scythian steppes, to Northwest Europe, where the Celts, another group of related tribes, were already settling.

Although not as well understood as the great European migrations beginning in the 16th century—when emigrants established colonies in North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa—the earlier migration was similar in many respects.

Although many clans from many tribes converged on Europe at the same time, most of those that finally settled in Northwest Europe were related and shared a culture. Many historians have acknowledged that the Anglo-Saxon peoples provided the racial stock that founded several modern Western nations, including Great Britain and the United States. This information can be found in many history books.

What isn't widely understood is the Celtic-Scythian link to the ancient Israelites. In the previous chapter we briefly discussed this connection. Now we turn our attention to God beginning to fulfill His promises to the descendants of Israel's presumably lost tribes after they had migrated to northwestern Europe and the British Isles and from there to America and the other British colonies around the world.

Promises of greatness for Joseph's descendants

Before his death the patriarch Jacob, through God's inspiration, prophesied what would happen to the descendants of his 12 sons in the "last days" (Genesis 49:1). Our focus in this chapter is on Jacob's prophecy concerning Joseph.

Joseph's modern descendants are the easiest to identify of all the lost tribes of Israel because the specific blessings they were to receive stand out so distinctly from those of the other tribes. God promised to Joseph's descendants—through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh—all the benefits of the *birthright* promises of national greatness and overflowing prosperity.

Notice Jacob's prophecy about Joseph in the last days: "Joseph is like a grapevine that produces *much fruit*, a healthy vine watered by a spring, *whose branches grow over the wall*. Archers attack him violently and shoot at him angrily, but *he aims his bow well*. His arms are made strong. *He gets his power from the Mighty God of Jacob* and his strength from the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.

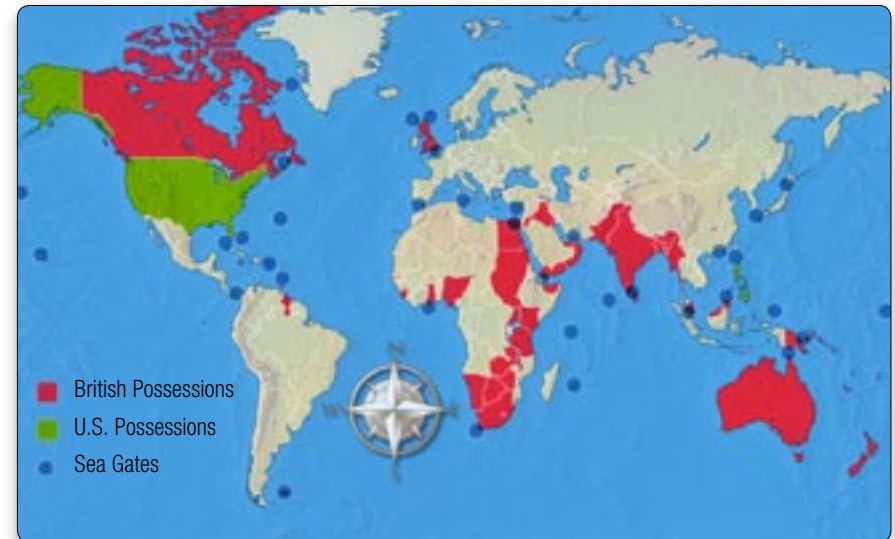
"Your father's God helps you. *God Almighty blesses you*. He blesses you with *rain* from above, with *water* from springs below, with *many babies* born to your wives, and many young ones born to your animals. The blessings of your father are greater than the blessings of the oldest mountains, greater than the good things of the long-lasting hills. May *these blessings* rest on the head of Joseph, on the forehead of the one who was

separated from his brothers" (Genesis 49:22-26, New Century Version).

Joseph's descendants, he said, were to be especially blessed—like a fruitful vine with a never-ending supply of water, insuring their constant growth. Their populations would multiply rapidly. They would expand to lands beyond their original borders, grow militarily strong and reap the choicest physical blessings of the earth. They would produce and prosper. These were the birthright blessings (1 Chronicles 5:1-2) God promised to Joseph's descendants. Because of these divine blessings, Joseph's descendants were to stand out among Israel's other tribes (Genesis 49:22-26).

Before his death Moses repeated the special blessings that would flow to Joseph's descendants. "And of Joseph he said: '*Blessed of the LORD is his land, with the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and the deep lying beneath, with the precious fruits of the sun, with the precious produce of the months, with the best things of the ancient mountains, with the precious things of the everlasting hills, with the precious things of the earth and its fullness, and the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush. Let the blessing come 'on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.'*

"His *glory* is like a firstborn bull, and his horns [military might]



A great nation and a multitude of nations: This ancient prophecy perfectly fits the United States and British Commonwealth. At the peak of their possessions, the British and American peoples controlled vast swaths of the world's most fertile farmlands and mineral-producing areas as well as strategic passages and ports controlling crucial military and trade routes.

like the horns of the wild ox; together with them he shall *push* the peoples *to the ends of the earth*; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh” (Deuteronomy 33:13-17).

God had promised to take a direct hand in delivering magnificent physical blessings to Joseph’s descendants.

When we understand that the modern descendants of Joseph are the people of the United States and Britain, we see that over the past three centuries God has been true to His promises. He has granted the physical birthright blessings of Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to their modern descendants—the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic people of Britain and the United States. The Anglo-Saxon and Celtic descendants have been the primary founders and shapers of British and American culture.

God also has made available to them *opportunities* to shine as spiritual beacons within a confused and darkened world. Regrettably, as with the ancient Israelites, only a few among them have been willing

Advocates of British-Israelism

The prosperity of Britain and the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries fueled the popular belief that the British and American peoples are in fact the descendants of the lost 10 tribes. This movement came to be popularly known as *British-Israelism*.

In the United States, where the idea of “manifest destiny”—the belief that it was the nation’s destiny to expand from shore to shore—was already firmly entrenched, advocates of British-Israelism promoted the biblical explanation for the nation’s unexplained growth and prosperity. Britain and the United States, they concluded, were recipients of the unconditional birthright of Joseph.

In recent times some have associated British-Israelism with the modern negative connotations of imperialism. Critics even allege that those who embraced this reasoning were only seeking a salve for their conscience to justify their imperialist tendencies. Such accusation, however, is simply not in keeping with the thinking of the 19th century. Those who project today’s political sensitivities on a past audience that viewed the world far differently are incorrect

and unfair in their assessment.

In the mid-19th century British subjects did not perceive imperialism as negative. They viewed it as *a magnanimous gesture*—that they were extending the blessings that had made their nation great to less-fortunate peoples around the globe. Indeed the British Empire provided many blessings to the peoples who became part of the empire.

Another criticism—this one accurate—aimed at British-Israel advocates is that some of their proponents incorporated racism into their beliefs. Prejudicial racist views have tarnished their reasoning, thus discrediting the historical aspects of their teachings. This is both regrettable and biblically unacceptable. Racial bigotry is most definitely not what the Bible teaches. God is not the author of such a point of view. He loves all people and commands us to do the same. The central issues we need to consider are whether many of the descendants of the 10 tribes of Israel reside in the British-descended nations today and, if so, what God expects of them.

Focusing on the biblical promises, some scholars have undertaken extensive research

to accept their responsibility and God’s calling.

God assigned a role to Joseph’s descendants

Even though God gave Abraham’s descendants national prominence and prosperity as He had promised, He did not do so at the expense of other peoples and nations. Rather, God’s far-reaching purpose has always been to lead *all* people into a permanent relationship with Him (Acts 17:30; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). Only then can they receive the power to change their human nature and receive the ultimate blessing of eternal life (Acts 4:12).

God designated Abraham’s descendants—by a promise, long before they existed as a people—to be His instruments in accomplishing important aspects of His purpose. He has used them in ways even they have not always discerned.

At the heart of God’s relationship with the ancient Israelites was

to advance the knowledge that God’s promised blessings to Abraham’s descendants have largely been fulfilled in the British and American peoples. Although many have contributed to the basic research, here are a few people who have made significant contributions to the advancement of this area of study.

John Wilson, Anglican layman from Cheltenham, England, published *Our Israelitish Origin* in 1840. This work was the first full-blown thesis connecting the Anglo-Saxons to ancient Israel. Wilson drew on the best of contemporary scholarship and methodology. He made particular use of the work of Sharon Turner (1768-1847), a monumental figure in British historiography whose multivolume work, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, traces the Anglo-Saxons back through Europe to the Balkan countries and ultimately to the Crimea and Caucasus Mountains—exactly what we would expect according to 2 Kings 17:6 and 1 Chronicles 5:26.

Edward Hine, a banker and successor of Wilson, wrote *Forty-Seven Identifications of the British Nation With Lost Israel* (1871). Hine claimed to have addressed 5 million people on this topic during his lecture-circuit career.

John Harden Allen, Methodist minister from the U.S. Pacific Northwest, wrote *Judah’s*

Sceptre and Joseph’s Birthright (1917).

T. Rosling Howlett, Baptist minister, had pastorates in New York City, Washington and Philadelphia.

Charles Piazza Smyth (1819-1900) was the royal astronomer of Scotland and emeritus professor of astronomy at Edinburgh University.

Col. John Cox Gawler (1830-1882) was the keeper of the British crown jewels.

Herbert Armstrong (1892-1986), founder and chancellor of Ambassador University, wrote *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, published in several editions until 1986.

Steven Collins wrote *The “Lost” Ten Tribes of Israel... Found!* (1992), later expanded into a four-volume series.

Yair Davidy authored *The Tribes: The Israelite Origins of Western Peoples* (1993), *Ephraim* (1995), *Ephraim: The Gentile Children of Israel* (2001) and *Joseph: The Israelite Destiny of America* (2001).

Raymond McNair, minister of the Global Church of God, wrote *America and Britain in Prophecy* (1996).

John Ogwyn, minister of the Living Church of God, wrote *What’s Ahead for America and Britain?* (1999).

His covenant with them and their descendants. That agreement defined the rules and responsibilities of the relationship between God and the Israelites. It set forth the obligations God imposed on Himself and His expectations of the nation He had created to be His holy people and a model nation to the world (Leviticus 20:26; Deuteronomy 4:5-8; 7:6).

God gave the promised birthright blessings to Joseph's modern descendants in Britain and America. At the same time He has made available to Israel's descendants—and indeed the whole world—the knowledge of what He expects of them spiritually. He has accurately preserved this knowledge in the Bible, and today that knowledge is available to anyone willing to read it—whether ethnically Israelite or gentile.

God makes His Word available

The British and American people have been the instruments used to spread God's Word to most of the known world. Although we often take the Bible for granted, and many U.S. and British homes now have several copies, it wasn't always this way.

For many centuries virtually the only copies available outside of the original languages were in Latin, with the Roman Catholic Church tightly controlling the common people's access to the Scriptures. "Yet it was in England, so long deprived of the living Word, where the battle was fought and won for the right of the common man to have his Bible in his own language" (Neil Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, 1986, p. 76).

After several attempts to produce English-language versions in the 1500s, in 1611 the king of England officially approved the publication of what has become known as the *King James Version of the Bible*. Its translators, by order of King James, produced it from its original languages by a large team of Hebrew and Greek scholars. It quickly gained the reputation of being the most accurate translation of the Bible ever attempted up to that time.

For almost 400 years it has remained the best-known Bible translation of the English-speaking world. It has been the model for Bible translations for practically all other languages. No single book has affected the history of the English-speaking people like the King James Bible.

The Bible has since been translated into thousands of languages, virtually every tongue, with the British-descended people printing and distributing hundreds of millions of copies all over the globe.

The policies and resources of America and Britain have both encouraged and enabled the true gospel of the Kingdom of God to be proclaimed around the world in recent years. They have provided the climate of religious freedom, the financial resources and most of the laborers that were needed to disseminate biblical knowledge to all nations.

Benjamin Disraeli: Maestro of Empire

God often names things what they are. Adam's name literally means "red earth," the substance from which God formed and shaped the first man (Genesis 2:7).

God gave Abram a name—Abraham (Genesis 17:5)—that connoted his fatherhood—"father of a multitude" (verses 4-6). Solomon, whose name derives from the Hebrew root word for "peace," presided over one of the most peaceful periods in Israelite history (1 Kings 4:24).

Is it so strange to think that God might still provide us similar signposts along the way through our history (Malachi 3:6)? One possible example of this is in the development of the British Empire and a remarkable man named Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881).

This son of a Jewish family that had converted to Christianity rose to the pinnacle of British political life and served twice as prime minister (1868 and 1874-1880). Historians sometimes describe him as the "maestro of empire," the British statesman who gave the late-19th-century British Empire a renewed emotional force.

During Disraeli's second administration England underwent a revival of interest in empire and territorial expansion. Acting boldly and with remarkable independence, Disraeli paid nearly 4 million pounds—money borrowed from the Bank

of Rothschild with the British government as security—for the purchase of 44 percent of the shares of stock controlling the recently constructed Suez Canal (1869). Otto von Bismarck of Germany, the "iron chancellor," aptly described the passageway as the spinal cord of the British Empire.

The next and perhaps most grandiose expression of Disraeli's imperial policies

was in connection with the linchpin of the Empire, India itself. On May 1, 1876, Disraeli saw that the Royal Titles Bill made Queen Victoria empress of India. In January of the next year, with fanfare and ceremony, the viceroy of India pronounced Victoria empress at a grand celebration in her honor. Later that same year Disraeli annexed the mineral-rich Transvaal in South Africa. Three years later, at the Congress of Berlin,

he acquired the strategic outpost of Cyprus in the Mediterranean.

In a remarkable coincidence one of the chief architects of the British Empire, Benjamin Disraeli, literally bears the name of Israel. Or is it coincidence? Given what we know about the promises to Jacob's end-time descendants and the timing of the issuance of the physical, material and national promises to Abraham, the name Disraeli reads more like a providential signpost.



Benjamin Disraeli, prime minister of Britain (1868 and 1874-1880), was a major architect of the expansion of the empire.

The Bible's role in society and law

Biblical principles even became the basis for much of English common law. English common law in turn heavily influenced American constitutional and regional law. In this manner the Bible has had a greater influence on the United States and the British Commonwealth nations than on any other people in recent centuries.

The Bible formed the foundation of these nations' professed ethical values and morality. Laws the nations established on biblical principles

The Bible in British and American History

When King James of England commissioned the translation of the Bible into English from its original languages, the massive undertaking was accomplished by a large committee of scholars representing the best interpretative skills then available. For almost 400 years this monumental work, completed in 1611, has been recognized as one of the premier translations ever undertaken. Although the Bible has been translated into almost every language, this English version remains the most influential of all.

Why is it that the Bible has been so predominant in Britain and the United States?

The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy notes that the Bible is "the most widely known book in the English-speaking world... No one in the English-speaking world can be considered literate without a basic knowledge of the Bible" (Hirsch, Kett and Trefil, 1988, p. 1). In Britain it was rated as one of the top 50 most-interesting books. In the United States it is perennially a best seller and the single book that Americans say has most influenced their lives.

The Bible is quoted by people of all walks of life including statesmen, politicians, philosophers, poets and even astronauts. Here are a few comments from some respected leaders:

- "It has been my custom for many years

to read the Bible in its entirety once a year" (John Quincy Adams).

- "A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education" (Theodore Roosevelt).

- "If we abide by the principles taught by the Bible, our country will go on prospering" (Daniel Webster).

- "I believe the Bible is the best gift that God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this Book. I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go" (Abraham Lincoln).

- "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible" (George Washington).

- "The Bible is the rock on which our republic rests" (Andrew Jackson).

- "We reject with scorn all these learned and labored myths that Moses was but a legendary figure. We believe that the most scientific view, the most up-to-date and rationalistic conception, will find its fullest satisfaction in taking the Bible story literally" (Winston Churchill).

Is it possible that the Bible so influenced the people of Britain and the United States because this book is their history book? Significantly, it tells not only the story of their distant ancestors but also their future.

became the basis of a huge part of their legal judgments. The United States in particular became the most biblically oriented nation in the world (with the possible exception of the modern state of Israel, founded in 1948).

Through the widespread availability of the Bible, God gave the English-speaking peoples essential information they needed to know what God expected of them. In addition, many were exposed to their true identity as descendants of Joseph through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh (see "Advocates of British-Israelism," page 76).

However, God has never forced the British and American peoples to accept their biblically ordained role. Like ancient Israel, He has given them a choice (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19). Only a small proportion of them have sincerely responded.

Why did all of this happen? What purpose is God working out for the last days? How has He been accomplishing the essential elements of His plan?

Let's review some of the significant international contributions Britain and America have made to the modern world. Then let's compare those to the promises God made to the descendants of Joseph.

If we find that the British and American people have received the biblically predicted benefits and blessings, we then have further evidence to substantiate that they are indeed the modern descendants of Joseph.

Have Britons and Americans perceived the hand of God?

The expression "God is an Englishman" mirrored the views of many people both in and outside the British Isles in the 19th century. What precipitated this startling point of view?

Britain's status in the world is only a shadow of what it was a century ago. You might have had difficulty convincing many people who lived in the 19th and 20th centuries that God was not somehow miraculously prospering the politicians, statesmen, diplomats, explorers, generals, admirals, soldiers, architects, engineers, scientists, inventors, bankers, businessmen, shopkeepers and entrepreneurs of the British Isles.

To many observers, both in and out of Britain, it appeared that success came to the British people whether they even pursued it—whether they made wise or foolish choices. It was as though certain blessings were overtaking them.

It was the perceived *inevitability* of success that inspired John Robert Seeley, Cambridge professor of modern history (1834-1895) and author of *The Expansion of England* (1884), to make the famous quip that England acquired her globe-spanning empire "in a fit of absence of mind."

The 1800s were certainly Britain's century. To their own astonishment the people of the relatively tiny British Isles found themselves ruling over

a mighty empire. As the 19th century drew to a close, the British Empire was “the largest empire in the history of the world, comprising nearly a quarter of the land mass of the earth, and a quarter of its population” (James Morris, *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire*, 1968, p. 21).

Yet the empire would continue to expand. “It continued to grow until 1933, when its area was 13.9 million square miles and its population 493 million ... The Roman Empire in its prime comprised perhaps 120 million people in an area of 2½ million square miles ...” (ibid., pp. 27, 42).

The British Empire, then, spanned 5½ times the territory of the Roman Empire, with more than four times the subjects. British rule extended over not just ordinary regions but some of the choicest and most fertile territories on earth.

It is hardly surprising that educated people of the day perceived the hand of God in the process. To them it seemed too obvious to ignore.

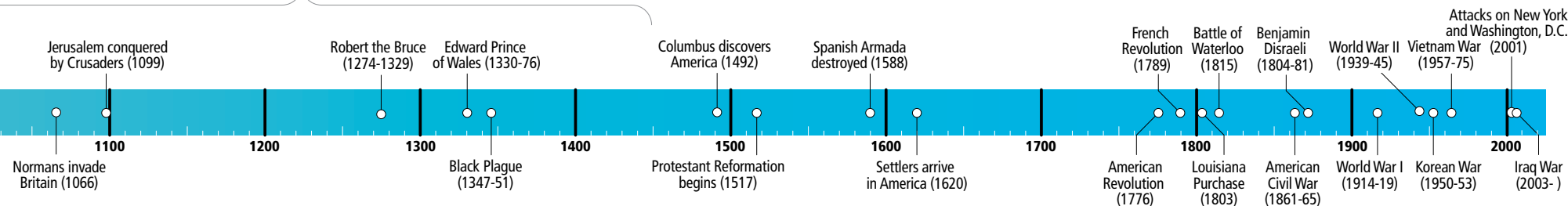
For example, Lord Rosebery, a British foreign secretary (1886, 1892-1894) and prime minister (1894-1895), spoke in November 1900 to the students of Glasgow University about the British Empire:

“How marvelous it all is! Built not by saints and angels, but by the work of men’s hands ... and yet not wholly human, for the most heedless and the most cynical must see the finger of the Divine.

“Growing as trees grow, while others slept; fed by the faults of others as well as the character of our fathers; reaching with a ripple of a restless tide over tracts, and islands and continents, until our little Britain woke up to find herself the foster-mother of nations and the source of united empires. Do we not hail in this less the energy and fortune of a race than the supreme direction of the Almighty?”

In those more biblically literate times, people like Lord Rosebery perceived the remarkable circumstances of the British people. God seemed to be blessing them much as He had promised to bless the ancient people of Israel. Therefore, to them it hardly seemed outrageous to regard the British people as chosen of God. Was their perception merely an expression of human vanity? Or were they truly observing the hand of God blessing their people and nation?

Middle Ages



The builders of the British Empire aspired to weld together a peaceful, productive domain ruling over a quarter of the world’s population. A great achievement of British administrators was the establishment and extension of law and order in Britain’s colonial and imperial territories around the globe. This alone brought untold blessings to the people of these territories.

This *Pax Britannica* bequeathed peaceful conditions to many regions formerly plagued by war and long-term ethnic hostilities. The British presence also stimulated territorial economic development and introduced many areas to Western technological advances. British missionaries became the bearers of biblical literature and knowledge to people from one end of the globe to the other. Both physical and spiritual blessings were freely distributed around the globe.

The British century

Great Britain had not always been great. Indeed, most of the rise of both Britain and the United States came after 1800. Only a couple of centuries before becoming the world’s premier power, England’s status was similar to that of all the other nations in Europe.

The Hapsburg Holy Roman emperor, Charles V, characterized the relative place of England among European nations on the eve of the 16th century. He is said to have remarked, “I speak Latin to God, Italian to musicians, Spanish to ladies, French at court, German to servants, and English to my horses.”

How did such a reversal of fortune and prestige for all things English occur over the next 200 years?

The industrial and economic growth of the Anglo-American world began to crescendo in the middle to late 18th century. Economic historians argue about the point at which the industrialization process reached critical mass. But, generally speaking, the earliest dates they suggest are the 1750s and the latest around 1800.

Britain also experienced a population explosion beginning during that same period. Historian Colin Cross notes that “one of the unexplained

mysteries of social history is the explosion in the size of the population of Great Britain between 1750 and 1850. For generations the British population had been static, or rising only very slightly. Then in the space of a century it almost trebled—from 7.7 million in 1750 to 20.7 million in 1850... Britain was a dynamic country and one of the marks of its dynamism was the population explosion” (*Fall of the British Empire*, 1969, p. 155).

This window of time seems to be directly related to Joseph’s exiled descendants receiving the promised birthright blessings. Although historians have wondered why the industrial revolution didn’t begin at some earlier point in history, this divine blessing may help explain why the gigantic increases in industrial capacity expanded so dramatically when they did.

The Bible reveals that God is in control of events and works them out according to His plan and timetable (Isaiah 46:9-10). He long ago made known, through the patriarch Jacob, that Joseph’s descendants would receive the birthright promises in “the last days” (Genesis 49:1, 22-26).

Other biblically prophesied troubles distinguish our modern age as the last days leading into the events prophesied in Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation. They confirm that the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham concerning the last days has been taking place. (For greater understanding of end-time prophecy, request your free copy of the booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* from our office nearest you or download it from our Web site at www.gnmagazine.org/booklets.)

The year 1776 was a landmark date. By that year the steam engine was in practical use, and within another decade—just a few years before the French Revolution of 1789 significantly slowed industrial development in France—it became a commercial success.

That same year American colonists declared their independence. This separation of the United States from Britain accomplished the prophecy that Manasseh and Ephraim would be separate peoples—one a great nation and the other “a multitude of nations” (Genesis 48:16, 19).

Another major event occurred about the same time. A Scottish University of Glasgow professor of moral philosophy, Adam Smith, published *Wealth of Nations*, which became the intellectual and philosophical support for England’s developing what has since become known as the capitalist economy. The capitalist system soon began to propel the Western world in general, and the British economy in particular, to unprecedented heights.

Though British diplomats and statesmen may have lacked a grand design for the construction of their empire, it became the largest and most beneficent empire in the history of mankind. It’s little wonder

that historians describe the 1800s as the British century.

American nationhood blossoms

The wars between France and England that culminated with the British victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815 had an indirect influence on America’s rise to greatness. Napoleon’s need for ready cash to pay for the costs of impending war with England led him to sell France’s vast American territories to the United States as the Louisiana Purchase.

The acquisition of the Louisiana territory in 1803 gave the American republic instant world-power status. The young country bought 828,000 square miles of the most fertile farmland in the world—the American Midwest—for less than 3 cents per acre! Overnight the size of the United States doubled, immeasurably strengthening the nation materially and strategically.

After that 1803 transaction the country expanded across the continent in less than a generation, adding huge swaths of territory with vast natural resources. In 1867 the United States added almost 600,000 more square miles when it purchased Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million—about 2 cents per acre.

Although no one realized it at the time, these great untapped blessings



The United States doubled its size with the 1803 Louisiana Purchase and within a few decades expanded across the continent. In less than a century the young nation added some of the world’s richest farmland and most valuable natural resources.

would allow America's citizens to lead the world in per-capita wealth in the next century. Though detractors openly ridiculed the purchase of Alaska at the time, income from its resources—timber, minerals, oil and the like—today amounts to tens of billions of dollars each year.

A commonwealth of nations

The other fulfillment of Jacob's prediction—that Ephraim would become "a multitude of nations" (Genesis 48:19)—also slowly but quickly picked up steam. It began as a result of Britain's victory over France in 1815. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars the Royal Navy ruled the oceans.

The British economy, stimulated by this conflict, emerged with unparalleled economic supremacy. The French bid for world hegemony—more or less continual since the days of Louis XIV (1643-1715) and the opening rounds of the Second Hundred Years War—had decisively failed.

Britain found herself free and in possession of the necessary political, economic and military power to build an empire that soon extended around the world. As modern Manasseh (the United States) began to build a nation that would soon extend from sea to shining sea, Ephraim (Britain) fell heir to lands around the world.

The British built an empire on which the sun never set. Its imperial structure was almost infinite in its diversity, comprised as it was of people from virtually every ethnic group and governed by means as centralized as the raj (British rule) in India or the British agent-general's office in Egypt or as independent as the dominion status granted to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

From a physical point of view, much of the Anglo-American dominance during the past two centuries came from the blessing of favorable geography and climate and the seemingly endless supply of natural resources accumulated during this time.

British territories were concentrated in the most productive regions of the temperate zone. An abundant and dependable food supply enabled



The Royal Navy's control of the oceans enabled Britain to maintain a worldwide empire and dominate the globe for most of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th.

them to support steady population growth from the 18th through much of the 20th centuries. Certainly the modern descendants of Joseph have been a "fruitful bough" (Genesis 49:22-25; see also Leviticus 26:9; Deuteronomy 6:3; 7:13-14; 28:4-5).

The British and American peoples inherited a treasure trove of natural resources.

What the British lacked within their own isles, they drew from an empire encircling the globe. Americans found everything necessary for national economic greatness—vast expanses of fertile soil; seemingly endless forests; gold, silver and other precious metals waiting to be mined; and massive iron ore, coal, petroleum and other mineral deposits—within the confines

of the continental United States and even more in Alaska.

Both peoples possessed "the best things of the ancient mountains"—the "precious things of the everlasting hills" and "the precious things of the earth and its fullness" within the territories they exclusively controlled (Deuteronomy 8:9; 28:1, 6, 8, 13; 33:13-17).

The world's military and commercial gateways

God's promise to Abraham included another provision: "Your descendants shall possess *the gate of their enemies*" (Genesis 22:17). In this context *gate* means a strategic passageway controlling commerce or military access for a region. Examples of strategic gates are the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez and Panama canals.

It is a fact of history that Great Britain and the United States gained control of the majority of the world's most important land and sea gates (see map on page 39). These have been critical to their economic and military dominance in the 19th and 20th centuries. Let's consider how Joseph's descendants acquired the three crucial sea gates mentioned above.

The first example took place as a result of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). The Spanish king, Charles II (1661-1700), had no



Britain, and later the United States, was blessed with control of many crucial strategic "gates" around the world, such as Gibraltar, above, a choke point controlling access between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.

children. The absence of an heir led to a controversy over succession to the Spanish throne. For a time it appeared the matter could be peaceably resolved. However, when Charles designated Philippe d'Anjou, the grandson of French King Louis XIV, as his successor, he destabilized the European balance of power.

Charles' decision confirmed the worst fears of fellow European statesmen concerning French intentions. At Versailles the Spanish ambassador, kneeling before the new king—now Philip V of Spain—was heard to murmur, “*Il n’y pas de Pyrenees*”—there are no more Pyrenees. He implied that the king’s ascension amounted to the union



Sydney, Australia



Cape Town, South Africa

Just as God promised to their ancient forefathers, He has given the modern descendants of Joseph—primarily Britain and the United States—the family birthright and many of the earth’s choicest blessings.

of France and Spain. But England’s growing dominance prevented this from coming to pass.

In 1701 England, at war with France, was determined to restore a favorable balance of power in Europe. England succeeded, and the French bid to dominate the Continent failed. In fact, England emerged from the conflict with the largest European navy and her status as a major power confirmed.

As a result of the war England acquired Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, the Hudson Bay territory, Minorca and, most important, Gibraltar, an indispensable international sea gate. Her possession of Gibraltar meant that she controlled the entry and exit to the Mediterranean Sea. These acquisitions were part of the terms of settlement of the Peace of Utrecht, April 11, 1713.

More than a century and a half later the British gained direct

control of another critical sea gate at the other end of the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal. The British remained at Suez for nearly three quarters of a century. This 100-mile man-made passage between the Mediterranean and Red seas has long been one of the world’s most heavily used shipping lanes, eliminating the long and arduous trip around the southern tip of Africa. In accordance with the biblical prophecy, God gave this sea gate to the British people—the modern descendants of Ephraim, son of Joseph.

A third critical sea gate acquired by Joseph’s descendants was the Panama Canal. Like Thomas Jefferson’s purchase of the Louisiana



London, England



Seattle, United States

territory or Benjamin Disraeli’s acquisition of Suez Canal stock (see “Benjamin Disraeli: Maestro of Empire,” page 79), American president Theodore Roosevelt took steps to secure Panama with bold decisiveness but questionable legality. About his presumption Roosevelt remarked, “I took the Isthmus, started the Canal, and then left Congress—not to debate the Canal, but to debate me” (Roger Butterfield, *The American Past*, 1966, p. 323).

A blessing to other nations

The rise to greatness of Britain and the United States was nothing short of astonishing. Says historian James Morris: “During the . . . years of Queen Victoria’s reign [1837-1901] *the Empire had grown by more than ten times*, from a scatter of disregarded possessions to a quarter of the land mass of the earth . . . It had changed the face of the continents with its cities, its railways, its churches, . . . and *it had changed the manner of life of entire peoples, stamping its own values upon civilizations from the Cree to the Burmese, besides creating several fully-fledged new nations of its own. There had never been such an Empire since history began . . .*” (*Heaven’s Command: An Imperial Progress*, 1973, p. 539, emphasis added).

Morris adds: “It was not merely the right of the British to rule a quarter of the world, so the imperialists thought, it was actually their duty ... They would so distribute across the earth their own methods, principles and liberal traditions *that the future of mankind would be reshaped*. Justice would be established, miseries relieved, ignorant savages enlightened, all by the agency of British power and money” (*Pax Britannica*, p. 26, emphasis added). God was using the English-speaking people to introduce a new set of standards and individual freedoms to the rest of mankind.

The British proved to be able administrators who dramatically improved the infrastructure and standard of living in the countries they governed. Although all aspects of their administration were not always carried out as justly and equitably as they should have been, God’s prophesied intent was accomplished. The sons of Joseph led the world into an era of unprecedented knowledge, prosperity and technological advancement. For the first time the Bible, plus biblically oriented reference works and publications, began to be distributed globally.

The United States, after pursuing an isolationist policy for many years, was eventually forced by events beyond her control to also take a larger role in world affairs—becoming the international model for freedom and individual rights. Attacked by Japan in 1941, an ill-prepared United States suddenly found itself at war with the Axis powers. It quickly geared up its industrial might, already harnessed to some extent in the early years of the war to aid Britain.

The United States emerged from World War II as the most powerful nation in the world. But, rather than using its strength to dominate and oppress the weaker nations of a shattered world, America set out to *rebuild* its defeated enemies—exhibiting a compassion that is indeed rare in the annals of international affairs.

From 1945 through 1952 the United States channeled \$24 billion (\$150 billion in today’s dollars) to the cause of rescuing and rebuilding Europe, including Germany. In Japan the United States governed the country for several years, rebuilding it and setting it back on its feet. In recent years both of these former enemy nations have emerged as global economic powers.

Since then both the United States and Britain have funneled many more billions in foreign aid to other countries. These are some of the ways Britain and the United States have been a blessing to the nations of the world. Along with those blessings, however, have been some misguided efforts and injustices. Such is the legacy of greatly blessed nations that have neglected to obey the God who blessed them.

Will Anglo-American dominance continue?

The 19th and 20th centuries saw the Anglo-American peoples dominate world affairs. Will this pattern continue into the 21st century?

British world dominance has long since passed. The two great wars of the 20th century took a terrible toll on Britain and her people. The conflicts robbed her of two generations of young men and drained her economically. By the end of World War II the British found themselves with neither the resources nor the will to preserve their empire.

After Britain gave India its independence in 1947 the British Empire began to dissolve with dizzying speed. Britain’s supremacy quickly gave place to American dominance in the second half of the 20th century.

Although American military, economic, industrial and technical power still reigns supreme, the spiraling moral decay of the United States does not bode well for the future. The biblically based values on which the founding fathers and American people built the United States of America have given way to denial of God and the same kind of self-serving materialistic orientation that led to the collapse of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Without a change in direction and emphasis, will the outcome for America be any different?

Far too many Americans and Britons have refused to acknowledge God and His blessings. In their intellectual and spiritual arrogance many have chosen to deny the existence of a Creator and accept the false religion of evolution and its secular-humanist theology.

They prefer to believe that the awesome blessings of national wealth and power are happenstance or the result of their own efforts. Like ancient Israel they have fallen into a trap of their own making, choosing to ignore God’s words of warning:

“When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. *Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God*, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, *then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God*, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (Deuteronomy 8:10-14, NIV).

In the next chapter we will see what is in store for the United States and Britain. Like it or not, what befalls them will affect all of humanity.

From Punishment to Destiny

“How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it” (Jeremiah 30:7, NIV).

Though the United States and Britain do not appear in the Bible’s prophecies of the end time under their present names, God hasn’t ignored these nations. He identifies them in prophecy according to their ancestry. Most people simply haven’t known where to look for them.

Throughout the long history of the lost 10 tribes of Israel, God has always known who and where they were. Just as He promised to their ancient forefathers, He has given the modern descendants of Joseph—primarily Britain and the United States—the family birthright and many of the earth’s choicest blessings. These nations have received a singular opportunity to provide leadership in the world at large. But what does the Bible say about their future? The answer is sobering.

Many Bible prophecies portray a repentant Israel at the return of Christ. Its descendants will turn to God and begin obeying His laws—but only *after* they have gone through crises worse in many ways than the catastrophes that befell the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

The descendants of Israel who repent and turn to God—described in prophecies as only a “remnant” of their previous population (Isaiah 11:11, 16; Jeremiah 23:3; Ezekiel 6:8)—will suffer enormously during the biblically prophesied time of “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21).

Only when they are humbled to the point of repenting of their sins will they be able to fulfill their God-ordained destiny of serving as a blessing to the nations. This wonderful future, however, will be preceded by the severest of trials. As Moses delivered the ancient Israelites from Egyptian slavery, Jesus Christ is coming to deliver modern Britain and America and the other Israelite-descended nations from an end-of-the-age subjugation by a modern religious and political system called “Babylon the great” (Revelation 17), centered in Europe.

This latter-day deliverance entails the fulfillment of some of the most astounding prophecies of the Bible: “‘Therefore behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that it shall no more be said, “The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,” but, “The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from *all* the lands where He had driven them.” For I will bring them back

into their land which I gave to their fathers” (Jeremiah 16:14-15).

But *why* will these calamities come on the United States and Britain?

God’s expectations of Israel

In fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God established Israel as a nation for the purpose of bringing blessings to other nations (Deuteronomy 9:5; Genesis 12:3). From their earliest days God expected the Israelites to be an *example* to the other nations around them of the divine blessings that would be poured out on all who worship and obey Him (Deuteronomy 4:6; 14:2).

If the Israelites would fulfill their part of their covenant agreement with God, God said He would make Israel the premier nation of the world (Deuteronomy 26:19; 28:1, 12-13). But if the Israelites disobeyed they would suffer the consequences (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). God told them other nations would take them captive (verses 25, 32-33, 36). Even their punishment was to be a lesson to other nations: “You shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword



Like the people of Britain, a large portion of the United States has in recent times come to ignore the teachings of the Bible.

among all nations where the LORD will drive you” (verse 37).

The Israelites were supposed to be a model to other nations of the blessings of obedience and the penalties of disobedience to God’s instruction. Regardless of the choices they have made, both anciently and today, this is still the role God has given them. And He holds them responsible for the way they respond to that role.

Nearly 3,500 years ago God told Israel: “Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

“When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you . . . And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you” (Deuteronomy 4:23-27).



Israel's descendants fail in their responsibilities

With the restoration of Joseph's birth-right promises to his descendants, Britain and the United States, the people of these nations have enjoyed unprecedented prosperity. Once again, like their forefathers, they have had the *opportunity* to be a “holy” people, an example of righteousness to other nations.

Britain had the opportunity to spread

Paradoxically, the United States is one of the most prosperous nations of the world and one of the most immoral.

ethical, godly civilization to much of the world. At the height of their empire, the British people took the Bible into far-flung corners of the earth. Yet today religion is routinely ridiculed in Britain's national news and entertainment media, and Christianity is foundering. Many church buildings have been shuttered and locked because people no longer attend. A large majority of the British people shows little or no interest in the teachings of the Bible.

Similarly, the United States was founded through leaders who for the most part held great respect for the Bible. Although officially favoring no single religion, the country soon became recognized as the leading Christian nation in the world. But in recent times a large portion of the nation has likewise ignored the teachings of the Bible. Paradoxically, the United States is one of the most prosperous nations of the world and one of the most immoral. It has one of the worst rates of crime and violence of all nations.

As in ancient Israel (Jeremiah 5:7-9), immorality runs rampant in the United States and the nations that once formed the British Empire. The number of broken homes and fatherless households has continued to skyrocket even as national prosperity has increased. Illegitimacy, the abortions

Photos, from left: iStockphoto, Zahid Hussein/Reuters/Newscom

of millions of innocent babies and epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases are the hallmarks of a sleazy, if-it-feels-good-do-it morality.

Millions seek escape in alcohol and illegal drugs. Crude and violent entertainment dominates the airwaves. Filth passes for culture. Millions of people live in fear of becoming victims of crime or random violence. Many cities are cesspools of crime, gang violence, poverty, illiteracy and illegitimacy. Greed and materialism have become the national religion in countries that have long prided themselves on being “Christian” nations. As a result of these and other sins, many now view the United States and Britain, once respected throughout much of the world, with ill-disguised contempt.

Among the most serious sins of the ancient house of Israel were idolatry and Sabbath breaking, by which Israel abandoned any regular pattern of hearing and learning more about God's Word.

Notice what God said through the prophet Ezekiel after Israel fell into captivity: “Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, *that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.* Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, which, if a man does, he shall live by them; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths . . . They despised My judgments and did not walk in My statutes, but profaned My Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols” (Ezekiel 20:12-13, 16).

As a result they began to believe that one religious belief or practice was no better than another—that they could change the rules of life as they pleased. Because of these beliefs and their sins, God allowed them to go into captivity.



Many now view the United States and Britain, once respected throughout much of the world, with ill-disguised contempt.

The same is true today. Although many people observe religious holidays, these holidays generally have nothing to do with the worship of the true God but are rooted in ancient idolatry. In many ways the sins of people today are identical to those of ancient Israel. (To better under-

stand the true origins of many of today's most popular holidays, be sure to request your free copy of the booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*)

The words of the prophet Hosea are a chillingly accurate description of the United States and Britain: "Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: 'There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn ...

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge ... The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me ... They set their heart on their iniquity ... So I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their deeds'" (Hosea 4:1-3, 6-9). Just as God punished ancient Israel for its sins, He plans to punish its modern descendants for their persistent disobedience.

God remains the same

God does not change (Malachi 3:6). He responds consistently and impartially to human behavior. He blesses for obedience and punishes for disobedience. The modern descendants of Israel should not ignore His timeless warnings.

At the beginning of Israel's history as a nation, God inspired Moses to write: "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

Likewise He explained His purpose and plan for Israel as a nation: "Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people ... He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken" (Deuteronomy 26:18-19). These are exactly the blessings and opportunities He has given to Britain and America, the modern descendants of Joseph.

So what lies ahead for these nations? What punishment will they have to suffer for choosing the ways of sin while turning their backs on the opportunities that God has given them?

The time of Jacob's trouble

The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the house of Judah in his day, the

sixth century B.C., when Judah faced God's chastening at the hands of the Babylonian Empire. But Jeremiah also prophesied to *the house of Israel*—which God had punished and sent into captivity *more than a century before he was born*. Jeremiah wrote of a time of *national trouble* that is yet ahead for the modern descendants of the lost 10 tribes of Israel.

Notice their condition when Christ returns: "'For behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will bring back *from captivity*



My people Israel and Judah ... And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it'" (Jeremiah 30:3).

Then Jeremiah describes why God will have to intervene and save modern Israelites. "'Alas! For that day is great, so that none is

Millions of people live in fear of becoming victims of crime or random violence. Many cities are cesspools of crime, gang violence, poverty, illiteracy and illegitimacy.

like it; and it is *the time of Jacob's trouble*, but he shall be *saved out of it*. For it shall come to pass in that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them'" (verses 7-8). Notice that the "yoke" and "bonds" that enslave the descendants of Jacob are placed on them by "foreigners"—enemy nations.

It is out of this foreign domination and enslavement that Christ will deliver them at His second coming. This will be the time when King David and Christ's 12 apostles—along with all the rest of God's saints—will be resurrected to begin ruling with Christ over a restored Israel in the Kingdom of God (Ezekiel 37:24; Matthew 19:28).

Jeremiah, still speaking of the end time, continues: "'But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the LORD, 'nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, *I will save you* from afar, and

your seed *from the land of their captivity*. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,’ says the LORD, ‘to save you; though I make a full end of all nations *where I have scattered you*, yet I will not make a complete end of you’” (Jeremiah 30:9-11).

The Bible gives most of the prophecies relating to this time of trouble in the context of how God plans to deliver the Israelites after He again punishes them. When Christ returns to begin the “*restoration* of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21), the modern descendants of Jacob will again be in a state of captivity. This means that Jacob’s “time of trouble” in the last days, as Jeremiah predicted, will indeed be severe.

Unparalleled trouble—and deliverance

Daniel says: “At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be *a time*

Dual Fulfillment in Bible Prophecy

Many prophecies in the Bible are dual. In such cases a prophet speaks under inspiration of God and a first fulfillment of the prophecy comes to pass. Then, later, often at the end of the age before the return of Christ, comes a final, ultimate fulfillment.

An excellent example of duality is found in a prediction Joel made about the Holy Spirit: “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD... I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there...” (Joel 2:28–3:2).

God inspired the apostle Peter to quote from this passage to describe events on the Day of Pentecost, when God founded the Church after Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 2:14-21). Miraculous manifestations of God’s power through the Holy Spirit did indeed occur then (verses 1-13). But these were only the first fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. The ultimate fulfillment will come at the time of the end and will involve, among other things, the gathering of the nations to God’s judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. This did not occur on the Day of Pentecost. So we see that prophecies can be dual.

In a similar fashion, God inspired many other prophecies with dual meanings. They applied as warnings to the Israelites at that time and as warnings to the modern descendants of those same people. The people of Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and the nations of northwest Europe who represent these people today would do well to heed these warnings.

of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time *your people shall be delivered...*” (Daniel 12:1).

Why will God allow this time of trouble? Through the prophet Zephaniah God speaks of His anger at the hardness of heart of the nations in the last days. He says: “I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them—all my fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger” (Zephaniah 3:8, NIV). He will spare no nation, no people.

Though all nations are to suffer His wrath, God explains explicitly *why* He will punish the Israelites at that time. During their time of national catastrophe those who refuse to listen to God’s warning and repent will perish. Only those who hear and heed God’s warning before and during this time of global vengeance will find mercy.

Notice Zephaniah’s words: “In that day... *I will take away from your midst* those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. *I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people*, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

“The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid. Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! *The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy*. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; *you shall see disaster no more*” (verses 11-15).

The modern descendants of Israel will have to endure this terrible period of punishment and captivity for not repenting of their sins and taking seriously the role God has given them. Even the Jewish people in Jerusalem and the modern state of Israel will not escape this captivity and punishment that is to occur shortly before Christ returns:

“Behold, the day of the LORD is coming... For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem... Half of the city *shall go into captivity*, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle” (Zechariah 14:1-3). The next few verses then describe the return of Christ, establishing that this captivity occurs at the time of the end.

Ezekiel’s warnings for us

Like Jeremiah, the priest Ezekiel prophesied long after the ancient kingdom of Israel had been crushed and its people taken away in the Assyrian captivity. King Nebuchadnezzar’s conquering Babylonian armies had forcibly removed from the land of Judah this young Jewish

exile, Ezekiel, and thousands of his countrymen some 130 years after the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Ezekiel's mission and message *could not* have been for the ancient kingdom of Israel. That kingdom *had long since vanished*. God had already banished its people into a foreign land in the far reaches of the Assyrian Empire hundreds of miles from Ezekiel's place of exile in Babylon. If God were using Ezekiel to warn the ancient kingdom of Israel, He was more than a century too late!

No doubt Ezekiel directed some of his message toward the nation of Judah, which at that time was going into captivity. But parts of His message were unmistakably directed to the "*whole house of Israel*"—*all 12 tribes*—and are applicable to the time of the end (Ezekiel 39:25; 45:6).

What was God's message for the "whole house of Israel" through the prophet Ezekiel? "Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says to the land of Israel: The end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land. *The end is now upon you and I will unleash my anger against you. I will judge you according to your conduct* and repay you for all your detestable practices. I will not look on you with pity or spare you; I will surely repay you for your conduct and the detestable practices among you. Then you will know that I am the LORD...

"When terror comes, they will seek peace, but there will be none... *I will deal with them according to their conduct*, and by their own standards I will judge them. Then they will know that I am the LORD" (Ezekiel 7:2-4, 25, 27, NIV).

The book of Ezekiel contains many similar warnings that apply to the modern descendants of all Israelites—both from the house of Israel and the house of Judah. God condemns the rampant immorality, corruption, greed, violence and oppression of the defenseless by the modern descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel. He abhors the fact that they have defiled themselves with false gods, despised His holy things and profaned His Sabbaths (Ezekiel 22:7-13).

Because of this moral degeneracy God also says: "I will *scatter* you among the nations, *disperse* you throughout the countries, *and remove your filthiness completely* from you. You shall defile yourself in the sight of the nations; *then you shall know that I am the LORD*" (verses 15-16).

God promises that He will punish or spare each individual human being according to his attitude and conduct. He explains: "When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it... I will judge *every one of you according to his own ways*" (Ezekiel 33:18-20).

National downfall and captivity

This devastating punishment will involve, as we see in these prophecies, the national downfall and captivity of the modern Israelites. Now let's examine some other crises the United States and other British-descended peoples will face during that time.

Notice the national curses God included in His covenant with ancient Israel: "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God... that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: Cursed shall you be..." (Deuteronomy 28:15-16).



These timeless curses for disobedience include crippling diseases and epidemics (verses 21-22, 27, 35, 59-62); mental illnesses (verse 28); upset weather patterns leading to devastating droughts (verses 23-24) and insect

These timeless curses for disobedience include upset weather patterns leading to devastating droughts and insect infestations that destroy crops and bring starvation.

infestations that destroy crops (verses 38-40, 42) and bring starvation (verses 53-57); and, finally, invasion and captivity (verses 32-33, 36, 41, 47-52, 64-68).

Leviticus 26:14-39 describes similar consequences, while also noting that God will "break the pride of your power" such that "you will flee when no one pursues you" (verses 17, 19).

We seem already to be witnessing the fulfillment of this prophecy in our time. Perhaps even more remarkable than the British Empire's rise to greatness was its rapid dismantling. From an empire on which the sun never set, Britain has lost possession after possession. Most of the nations that once formed the British Empire are now independent, no longer subject to British rule.

The United States, which emerged from World War II as the world's preeminent military power, soon was fighting to a bloody stalemate in Korea and a humiliating defeat in Vietnam. Even in recent wars, such as those in Iraq, Kuwait, Bosnia and Serbia, in which America achieved its

initial military aims, U.S. forces remained bogged down with costly peace-keeping obligations and no easy escape. Only in such overwhelmingly one-sided conflicts as in Grenada and Panama has the United States emerged



At the end of World War II, the United States was unrivaled as a military power. Yet it soon fought to a stalemate in Korea and suffered humiliating defeat in Vietnam.

as the clear-cut victor since its stalemate in the Korean War.

Even though the United States remains the world's most powerful military power by a large margin, its advantage is greatly undermined by lack of political will and the commitment to decisively win its wars.

In another sign of their decline, Britain and the United States have lost many of the strategic sea gates they gained and maintained at great cost. In recent years they have surrendered such crucial strategic possessions as the Panama Canal and Hong Kong. No doubt this trend will continue.

"A time of great distress"

Other prophecies indicate that the turmoil prophesied to engulf the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the democracies of Northwest Europe will be only a prelude to a time of tumult and chaos unlike anything the world has seen.

Describing the terrible time just before His return, Jesus said: "It will be a time of great distress, *such as there has never been before* since the beginning of the world, and *will never be again*. If that time of troubles were not cut short, *no living thing could survive*; but for the sake of God's chosen it will be cut short" (Matthew 24:21-22, Revised English Bible).

Photos, from left: Digital Stock, U.S. Army (2), PhotoDisc

Only in recent decades has humanity faced the terrifying prospect of human annihilation. We have enough nuclear weapons stockpiled to kill every man, woman and child many times over. Some nations—including terrorist states—have the means to lay waste entire countries with chemical or biological weapons. Many Bible prophecies serve as eerie reminders of the kind of carnage such weapons can cause.

How devastating will this time be? The book of Revelation describes a combination of supernatural and man-made catastrophes that will ravage the earth at the time of the end. In one great disaster alone fully *one third* of earth's population—*billions* of people—will die (Revelation 9:15, 18). Conditions will be so grim that "men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them" (verse 6).

God does not enjoy punishing people. Through Ezekiel He says: "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked *turn from his way and live*. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, *O house of Israel?*'" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Regrettably, this is the only way many people will ever be brought to repentance.

Israel restored to greatness

In spite of these great calamities, prophecy tells us that, after Jesus Christ's return to earth to establish the Kingdom of God, the survivors of the tribes of Israel will experience even greater honor than they've previously known. God promises an unprecedented regathering of Israel.

"It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again *the second time* to recover the remnant of His people who are left ... He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah *from the four corners of the earth*" (Isaiah 11:11-12).

Those who return will be a transformed and humbled people. Speaking of when Israel would go into captivity, God said: "And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see



With the development of nuclear weapons, in the last century, the extinction of the human race became a real possibility. Enough nuclear warheads exist to kill every human being on the planet many times over.

nor hear nor eat nor smell. But *from there you will seek the LORD your God*, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

“When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you *in the latter days*, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice (for the LORD your God is a merciful God), *He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers* which He swore to them” (Deuteronomy 4:28-31).

Notice that the time setting for this passage is “the latter days” (verse 30). God knows that when people turn from obedience to Him they usually must learn their lesson the hard way. Yet He is always willing to bless those who turn from their wicked ways.

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God says of this



“It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall ... recover the remnant of His people who are left ... He will ... assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

time: “... When the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds ... So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.

“... I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you*; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. *I will put My Spirit within you* and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:17-28).

God never fulfilled this prophecy in ancient Israel or Judah, since He

made His Spirit available only to a select few before He began the New Testament Church in A.D. 31, as recorded in Acts 2. These events are *yet to take place*. God promises that, when these people humble themselves and repent, He will make His Spirit available to them. No longer will they be rebellious and disobedient to their Maker. Led by that Spirit, they will willingly follow God, obeying His laws.

An Israel reunited

As end-time prophecies about Israel unfold, these people will come to understand God and His expectations of them in a way they have never known. The descendants of the lost 10 tribes of the northern kingdom will discover they are not gentiles, as so many mistakenly believe. As humbled people, they will turn from their evil ways and seek the true knowledge of God. The house of Israel and the house of Judah will unite again as one nation under Christ.

The prophecies of Ezekiel point to the dramatic reunion of those of “lost Israel” with their brothers from Judah. “As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: ‘For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.’ Then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.’ Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand ...

“Then say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land ... They shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again”’” (Ezekiel 37:16-17, 21-22).

This unified nation will be comprised of both the Jewish people—the descendants of the ancient kingdom of Judah—and the descendants of the other 10 tribes.

After the end-time period of “Jacob’s trouble,” which will be God’s just and necessary correction of modern Israel, a repentant remnant will survive. Those of the so-called lost tribes of the northern kingdom, including the British and American people, will have repented of breaking the laws of the covenant, including God’s Sabbath and Holy Days. The Jews of the southern kingdom will have acknowledged Jesus as the true Messiah.

Finally, modern descendants of both kingdoms, for the first time in almost 3,000 years, will reunite as one nation.

God makes another astounding promise: “*David My servant shall be king over them*, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk

in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; *and My servant David shall be their prince forever.* Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be *an everlasting covenant* with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore” (verses 24-26).

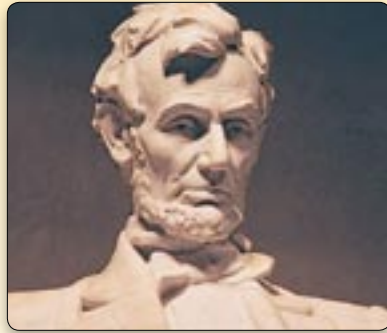
At Jesus' return, God will resurrect King David, whom He called “a man after My own heart” (Acts 13:22), to reign over the reunited kingdom. Along with many other faithful servants of God, he will be resurrected to eternal life (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:52). Also, as Jesus promised, the 12 apostles will rule over the individual tribes (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30).

Now let's consider the international role the restored, reunited Israel of the future will fulfill in God's plan. Let's see how the descendants of Jacob will be a godly example for all nations in the future Kingdom of God.

Israel's future glory

Of the formation of this reunited nation God says: “... I will gather

**“We have become...
too proud to pray to
the God that made us.”**



“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown.

“But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

“Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.”

—Abraham Lincoln, U.S. president 1861-1865.

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the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking.

“Behold, the days are coming that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:3-6). This supreme ruler is Jesus Christ.

Under Jesus the resurrected saints—those former human beings who were part of the body of believers comprising His true Church—will faithfully serve as teachers of the citizens of restored Israel (compare Isaiah 30:19-21 with Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:4, 6).

When the Israelites turn to God in repentance and obedience, God will again shower physical blessings on them. Their land will become abundantly productive.

Describing this future prosperity Amos wrote: “Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,’ says the LORD your God” (Amos 9:13-15).

This time will also herald unprecedented peace. “He [Jesus the Messiah] shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken” (Micah 4:3-4).

The prophets also reveal this will be a time of healing. Those who are lame will walk. Those with disease will be healed (Isaiah 35:5-6).

As other nations see Israel's prosperity and relationship with God, they will inquire how they, too, can be blessed. They will soon learn that Israel's prosperity comes because of its obedience to God. Then the gentile nations will seek to learn about the God of Israel. “... ‘In those days 10 men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you”’” (Zechariah 8:23).

The nations will begin to learn God's ways with the help of a restored

and obedient Israel. Jerusalem will become the world's center for religious education. As the prophet Micah explained:

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:1-2).

Finally, Israel will at last really be the world's model nation, exemplifying the blessings and way of life other nations will strive to emulate. God will teach the truth of His Sabbath—the sacred time to draw close to God on a weekly basis—to all people (Isaiah 66:23).

God's Holy Days—which outline His plan of salvation—will also be an important part of the worship of God in this future age. God even tells us that representatives of surrounding nations will come each year to Jerusalem to worship Him during the great fall feast.

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the *Feast of Tabernacles*. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain” (Zechariah 14:16-17).

The glory of the restored Israel will shine far greater than Israel's golden age under Solomon or that of any other nation or kingdom the world has ever seen. It will all come about because Christ will be the Head of the nation. Through its Creator Israel will gain “fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth” (Zephaniah 3:20). Israel will finally become the example God intended her to be.

God has not forgotten—nor will He ever forget—His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The pages of history and prophecies yet to be fulfilled show God remaining true to every detail of His word.

Your part in God's plan

Now we come to the most important question you will ponder: What will happen to you as these prophecies unfold?

We have covered much of the history of Israel in this book. We have seen how these people were divided into two nations, turned away from God and went into captivity. We have examined prophecies and historical evidence that point to Britain, the United States and the other British-descended peoples as the modern descendants of Joseph, the father of the Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. We have reviewed prophecies

that reveal what will happen to these peoples before and after Jesus' return. Every nation on earth will be affected by their fall and restoration.

You have a choice. You can dismiss this knowledge if you want. No one can force you to accept it. The story is so incredible that many people simply refuse to believe it. They choose to reason their way around it. But the stakes are high. Either God is true to His promises,

“I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever.”



“God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of people that these liberties are of the gift of God?... Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever.”

—Thomas Jefferson, U.S. President 1801-1809.

or He isn't. If He is, every promise and prediction He has made will come to pass—good and bad alike.

In deciding which course you will take, remember what God told the ancient Israelites after He explained the terms of the relationship they would have with Him: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life*, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for *He is your life...*” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

God also tells us He “now commands *all men everywhere to repent*,

because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world...” (Acts 17:30-31). His warning applies equally to Israelites and non-Israelites alike. Yet, He promises protection from the coming storm to a group of those who do turn to Him in true repentance (Revelation 3:10; 12:13-17).

Jesus similarly tells us: “Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36, NIV).

God does not leave us in the dark. He reveals to us what lies ahead for the United States, Britain and the British-descended peoples and for the rest of the world. As the Scriptures say: “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

The authors and publishers of this book, in service to the Creator of all races and peoples, have shown what the future



God has not forgotten—nor will He ever forget—His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The pages of history and prophecies yet to be fulfilled show God remaining true to His word.

holds for many nations and people unless they repent (Jeremiah 18:7-8). Like the prophet Ezekiel, who was given the task of being a “watchman for the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 3:17-19; 33:1-7), we likewise urge you to accept and follow God’s instructions so you may also be blessed and protected by Him.

Your future depends upon your decision. May you have the wisdom and character to choose wisely!

If You Want to Learn More ...

If you’d like to learn more about the themes and subjects mentioned in this book, be sure to read the following free publications:

- *The Good News* magazine.
- *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.
- *The Ten Commandments*.
- *The Road to Eternal Life*.
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Shaun Venish

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