

Anglo-Israelism and the United States & Britain in Prophecy

The United States and Britain in Prophecy was published for several decades, and several million copies were given away, and many readers accepted its conclusion — that the northern ten tribes of Israel eventually migrated to northwestern Europe, that the Anglo-Saxon peoples in particular are descendants of the Israelites, and that people should look for a fulfillment of biblical prophecies among these peoples.

People believed it, since it claimed to be based on the Bible, and many verses were quoted within it pages. However, in 1990, The United States and Britain in Prophecy was withdrawn from circulation. This book affected many people, and some people were disappointed when it was withdrawn. Some people still believe that it is an important biblical truth, an important key that unlocks biblical prophecy — the identification of the Anglo-Saxon peoples as the leading representatives of the lost tribes of Israel. The idea is that God wants his end-time church to warn those peoples of his coming wrath. The United States and Britain in Prophecy (USBP) was seen as one of the principal means of doing that.

However, God's church is commissioned to preach the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not only a message of repentance, but one of faith and hope. Through Christ we can be reconciled to God and each other. It is the message of God's love for everyone. God wants to forgive every person. He wants to impute Christ's righteousness to everyone. He does not want anyone to perish. Those who repent and turn in faith to Christ shall be saved. God sent Christ to reconcile us to himself.

This message and our commission to preach it has been given to us by Jesus Christ. No other job is as important. As Christians, our supreme authority is Jesus Christ, not church tradition, custom or practice. "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me," Jesus said (Matthew 28: 18). Luke writes that Jesus, talking to his disciples, "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, `This is what is written; The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations'" (Luke 24: 46-47).

Christ holds us accountable to fulfill his commission, not as we define it, but as he defines it. One verse that summarizes the work God has given us is John 6: 29: "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." So we urge others to become involved in that work — the work of believing in Jesus Christ.

The foundation of faith and preaching is not identifying particular peoples in prophecy. The foundation of faith is Jesus Christ, the One who has commissioned us, the One in whom we have faith and the One we seek to imitate. "Each one should be careful how he builds," Paul warns, "for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3: 10-11). From the Gospels to Revelation, the central focus is Jesus Christ. Revealed in those pages is the story of God incarnate, crucified for the sins of humankind, and raised from the dead. It is the story of Christ yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The church's message is that through Christ, God brings grace to humanity. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not based on national or ethnic origins. In fact, one challenge facing the early church was to help some members overcome prejudices that inhibited their embracing God's intended universality of the church. The Scriptures proclaim a grace-based, not a race-based, message. The church took that message of God's grace to all races everywhere. "You will be my witnesses," Jesus proclaimed, "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Jesus made the church "a house of prayer for all peoples" (Mark 11:17).

The first Christian lay members understood that they shared in that commission. Being a Christian meant that they proclaimed Christ as Lord. Even persecution did not stop the proclamation:

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. (Acts 8:1-4)

Always, where the details of the Christian message are given, Jesus Christ is the central subject. Society soon identified members of this new faith with him alone. They gave them the name *Christians*.

Yet Christians sometimes find themselves distracted from the Christ-centeredness of the commission. Besides becoming diverted by the cares and temptations of the flesh, we also can be distracted even by other religious concerns.

Perhaps the most intoxicating subjects are those thought to be revealed only to the few. Such doctrines require accepting "secret keys" to knowledge that the rest of the world cannot see. These ideas often have nothing to do with, or even contradict, the message of salvation God told us to proclaim. Of course, adherents to these systems deny this. They try to interweave their secret knowledge into the gospel. The gospel then becomes diluted. It is then neglected or even scuttled.

No one is immune to this. The allure of having inside knowledge can appeal to one's vanity and the human desire to feel superior. Paul explained that some would ridicule the need to be Christ-centered:

We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:23-24)

Paul added, "When I came to you...I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

So it is today. The commission of the church, given to it by God, is to proclaim Jesus Christ and him crucified. No other teaching, no other doctrine comes close to this doctrine's greatness.

For What Do We Stand?

If asked to define what we as a church stood for, many in or outside of our fellowship would have defined us in terms of a particular doctrine or group of doctrines. In times past, many would have viewed us as prophecy-centered. Few would have described us as Christ-centered.

When a church emphasizes prophecy, it may unwittingly hinder the gospel.

In some cases, the teachings in USBP were used to support racism, as if it were somehow better to be Israelite than another other ethnicity. It saddens us when Christians erroneously justify their racist attitudes through misuse and misunderstanding of the Bible. While one might expect that some people new in the faith might harbor racial prejudice, as God's Spirit leads them, they should come to see how poisonous such thinking is. They should then seek God's help in conquering such attitudes.

Of course, racism takes many forms. Sometimes it is open and blatant. At other times it is subtle. Even well-meaning believers can have elements of racism dwelling in the dark corners of their heart. They may not recognize those feelings, and when those feelings are pointed out these individuals may sincerely deny having them. These otherwise Christian people just happen to believe their race is somehow and in some way superior to another race.

When a church's teaching centers around the English people being modern descendants of Israel, non-Anglo-Saxons sometimes find fellow Christians looking down on them simply because they are not "Israelites." To these people, being German, African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Ukrainian, Italian, Polish (or a member of any other ethnic group) is to be inferior. Perhaps as a form of psychological self-defense, a few of Eastern or Southern European descent may speculate that, perhaps due to Israel's wanderings, they are Israelite, not gentile. To them, it somehow seems inferior to be 100 percent gentile. Obviously, such views do not belong among God's people.

Lest someone take these comments out of proportion, it should be said that people in our fellowship have generally, easily and warmly welcomed all races, even into their homes. This was true even when the surrounding society generally viewed such hospitality negatively. Members sometimes suffered alienation from their neighbors by showing love to those of another race.

We also can appreciate our history of comparative racial harmony and cooperation. Compared to the communities around us, within our midst there has been significantly less racial tension. That is wonderful, but we should not allow this to blind us to the need for further growth. That is why we do not wish to promote literature, unnecessary to the gospel, that may be used by some to perpetuate spiritually destructive racial attitudes. Let all barriers to racial harmony come down. Let the church live Paul's admonition that "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him" (Romans 10:12).

Biblical and Historical Problems

We now turn to the biblical and historic problems with the teaching. Much evidence calls into question the teaching's basic premises. In this study paper we cannot cover all of the scriptural and historical problems of the book, but we will summarize its major deficiencies.

The criticisms that follow are not limited to USBP. That book is but one of many that allege to prove what scholars label Anglo-Israelism — the belief that Anglo-Saxons descend from the "lost 10 tribes of Israel."

When reading Anglo-Israelite literature, one notices that it generally depends on folklore, legends, quasi-historical genealogies and dubious etymologies. None of these sources prove an Israelite origin for the peoples of northwestern Europe. Rarely, if ever, are the disciplines of archeology, sociology, anthropology, linguistics or historiography applied to Anglo-Israelism. Anglo-Israelism operates outside of the sciences. Even the principles of sound biblical exegesis are seldom used, for, as we shall see later, whole passages of Scripture that undermine the entire system are generally ignored.

Why this unscientific approach? This approach must be taken because to do otherwise is to destroy Anglo-Israelism's foundation. Those who apply scientific disciplines and the principles of sound historiography to this subject eventually come away disbelieving the theory. As we shall see, even lay students of the Bible can find serious flaws in the idea.

No first-hand account exists that traces the lost 10 tribes into northwestern Europe. No eyewitness to European tribal migrations ever claimed an Israelite origin for any of them. No medieval or ancient genealogies ever linked the royal families of the British Isles with the Israelites. Not until the 19th century (long after the supposed migration) did anyone attempt to prove such an idea.

A People Prepared

Prior to the beginnings of Anglo-Israelism, Puritan and American religious ideas had prepared a people for its acceptance. Two themes in particular prepared the way: covenant theology and the idea that America was a new Israel.

Covenant theology was a deeply imbedded concept in Puritanism, claiming as its basis God's covenants with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes of Israel.

The heart of covenant theology was the insistence that God's predestinating decrees were not part of a vast impersonal and mechanical scheme, but that, under the Gospel dispensation, God had established a covenant of grace with the seed of Abraham.... They tended to agree that the effectual call of each elect saint of God would always come as an individuated personal encounter with God, as had Abraham of old. (Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of*

the American People, vol. 1 [Garden City, New York: Image Books {Doubleday}, 1975], 177-8).

The second theme, that America was a new Israel, also found its greatest support among New England Puritans. Just as God had called Israel to start a new nation in Canaan, so they believed he had called them to start a new society in Northern America. "Like Israel, they had a special destiny, the one standing at the beginning of God's plan, the other at the end."¹ The idea that America was a new Israel remained an influential thought in American Christianity well beyond the American Revolution.

Throughout the American states, though most definitely in New England, a particular Protestant view of history had long been widespread. This view rested partly on the usual Protestant interpretation of papist apostasy and Reformation renewal of the Church and partly on English and Scottish convictions that the British kingdoms harbored a people chosen by God for unusual service in advancing his providential plan.... These assumptions, broadened, amalgamated, invigorated, and politicized by the Revolution, stood behind the popular image of the American Israel, with all its implications of election, vocation, and guidance. Hence Christian patriots saw nothing incongruous in linking Moses and [Governor] Winthrop with [George] Washington, who "with his worthy companions and valiant band, were instrumental in the hand of Jesus, the King of Kings, to deliver this American Israel from their troubles." (J.F. Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," *The Religion of the Republic*, Elwynn A. Smith, ed. [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970], 188)

The first fully-developed scripturally-argued presentation of Anglo-Israelism was by John Wilson, in his book *Our Israelitish Origins*. Published first in England, then in the United States in 1840, it was immediately successful and went through numerous editions. One factor influencing the success of *Our Israelitish Origins* was that it answered the troubled conscience of a religious people. How could Christians justify, in light of the gospel, their colonialism, expansionism and enslavement of others? Religious people wanted to believe God supported their growing economic, political and military power. For some, Anglo-Israelism seemed to provide such a justification.

Anglo-Israelism also came to America at a time when the new religion of Mormonism was arousing significant interest. Founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith, their "new revelation," the Book of Mormon, claimed an Israelite link for an ancient, pre-Columbian race of Native Americans. Anglo-Israelism offered a counter-explanation to the Mormon claim about the lost tribes and could therefore be viewed as a defense of orthodox Christianity.

Anglo-Israelism arose at a time of increasing skepticism of the Bible among America's most highly educated. Deism, Unitarianism and skepticism had become popular in intellectual circles. Scientific discoveries, especially in geology and astronomy, raised difficult questions as to the historical accuracy of the earliest chapters of Genesis, while philosophic speculations challenged reason's ability to lead anyone to ultimate truth.

Anglo-Israelism's popularity can in part be explained by its apparent ability to answer the Bible's critics, for it claimed to prove that God, having spoken his promises over 3,500 years ago, was fulfilling those promises in today's world. Did that not prove the Scriptures to be both God-inspired and currently relevant? For many concerned with preserving biblical faith, Anglo-Israelism proved strongly attractive.

Yet the fact that Anglo-Israelism arose among people looking for a way to justify their imperialism and human exploitation, while also searching for ways to defend their faith, should cause us to pause and ask how much proof there actually is for that belief. Did the belief spring from the Bible, or did it arise out of the social concerns of the 19th-century Anglo-Protestant world?

One might ask, If Anglo-Israelism is so easily proven, then where are the respected historians, archaeologists, philologists, anthropologists, genealogists, classical and medieval specialists and even folklorists who support it?

Royal Genealogies

A favorite topic of Anglo-Israelites is the legendary royal genealogies of the British Isles. USBP claimed that these genealogies can be linked to the line of King David. Not mentioned by many Anglo-Israelites is that, before the rise of Anglo-Israelism, no British royal family ever claimed Davidic descent. No such genealogy existed. Any alleged genealogy linking the British royal family to King David is an Anglo-Israelite invention. Despite the Anglo-Israelite claim that an Israelite princess migrated to Ireland and married into a royal family, proof of such has never been produced. Yet today, unsuspecting people assume that the genealogies produced by Anglo-Israelites are proven, when they are not. These genealogies are nothing more than the fabrication of the Anglo-Israelite movement itself.

The Davidic Promises

The New Testament takes a strikingly different approach than that of Anglo-Israelism. There, repeatedly, the Davidic promises find fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

For example, the first chapter of the New Testament, Matthew 1, emphasizes Jesus' Davidic lineage. It is but one proof of his Messiahship. He holds the title Son of David. He, not some human king in a far-off isle, is the true heir of the Davidic promises. Because this is the New Testament perspective, the church has chosen to emphasize what the New Testament emphasizes.

At this point it might be wise to interject one example of the kind of teaching often used to support Anglo-Israelite views. In *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, Ezekiel 21:27 is quoted to prove that God would overturn the throne of David three times, transferring it each time to a new location. The theory is that the first overturning transferred the throne from Jerusalem to Ireland, the second to Scotland, and the third, under King James, to England.² Therefore Queen Elizabeth II is an alleged descendant of King David.

In the King James Version, Ezekiel 21: 26-27 reads, "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown.... Exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."

Now perhaps the most obvious point that we should mention is that neither Ireland, Scotland, England nor their royal families are mentioned in Ezekiel. These must be read into the text through Anglo-Israelite eyes. As to the meaning of the verse itself, the use of other translations gives insight.

The New International Version reads, "Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was.... A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! It will not be restored until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs; to him I will give it." Nothing in this translation implies an overthrowing and transfer of the throne to another country. Instead it tells us that the house of David would be without a ruling king until God decides to fill the vacancy with the rightful heir.

The New King James supports this interpretation, for it reads: "Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him."

The New Revised Standard Version puts it this way. "A ruin, a ruin, a ruin — I will make it! (Such has never occurred.) Until he comes whose right it is; to him I will give it."

Properly understood, "The threefold repetition of 'ruin' stresses the intensity of God's wrath and its destruction administered by Babylonia."³ The verse is about the total vacancy of the Davidic throne until the rightful heir comes. The wording of "the phrase until he come whose right it is recalls the Messianic prophecy in Genesis 49: 10."⁴ That this verse prophesies the Messiah's ascension to the vacant Davidic throne is understood by both Jewish and Christian commentators. That is the natural sense of the verse. The consistent New Testament witness is that Jesus is that rightful heir.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Yet many Christians would argue that Anglo-Israelism is not based on folklore, questionable genealogies or dubious scriptural interpretations. They insist it is based on God's covenant promises to Abraham, which have allegedly found fulfillment only in the peoples of northwestern Europe. Furthermore, it's alleged the whole idea finds root in the lack of such fulfillment in Old Testament Israel.

However, the covenant that the New Testament preaches is not sealed through circumcision, as was the Abrahamic covenant, but is ratified with the blood of Christ. The focus of the new covenant is the Son of David, Jesus Christ, and the true Israel of God, the church. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promises.

The New Testament emphasizes the new covenant. It is a covenant of grace, not race. It is a covenant God made in his great love for all peoples. It is a covenant that does not distinguish between color of skin, facial features, shape of skull or ancestry. That covenant is the one we celebrate.

But now let us take time to examine the Anglo-Israelite interpretation of Israelite history and, in particular, the interpretation the church gave that history in USBP. We will start by examining God's promises to the patriarchs.

A Father of Many Nations

God promised to Abraham that he would father a multitude of nations (Genesis 17:5-6). USBP contended that "These are basic — the foundation for the establishment of the greatest world powers."⁵ It alleged that in all biblical history, Abraham's descendants never became a multitude of great nations. Therefore the Jews could not possibly have fulfilled this promise. We must, the argument continues, look outside the Bible to discover who did.

Let's consider the term nation. We can begin by asking, In the Bible, is a nation always a political unit, a country, a state or empire as we know it today? The answer is no, for in Deuteronomy 26:5 we read, "[Israel] went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous." At that time Israel was a nation, yet Israel lived within the country of Egypt.

Therefore, when discovering how Abraham became the father of many nations, we do not limit our search to countries. We expand our search to include distinctive peoples, some of whom may have been independent, while others may have lived within a state, country or empire. Political units are not the deciding factor. Distinct peoples are. These peoples, having the same father, are very closely related, yet with time and increasing size they have developed their own distinctive characteristics, sufficient to be called nations (not countries).

Who were the nations that came from Abraham? Most of us already know he became the father of the tribes of Israel and Judah. He also fathered the Midianites (Genesis 25:2, 4), the Ishmaelites (Genesis 17:20) and the other Arabic tribes descended from his sons Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Ishbak and Shuah (Genesis 25:1-3). Finally, there were the Edomites, descendants of his grandson Esau (Genesis 36). While God did not count most of these as "children of the promise," and therefore they did not receive the promised blessings, they did fulfill God's promise that Abraham would father many nations.

Yet there is another aspect of this promise we should consider. In the New Testament, we have an inspired commentary on this very promise. Paul explains that God intended more than a physical fulfillment. He intended an even greater fulfillment in the church:

It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.... Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace

and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations [Genesis 17: 5]." He is our father in the sight of God.... Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (Romans 4: 13-18, emphasis ours throughout)

Abraham, with the founding of the New Testament church and having been the father of many nations physically, became the father of many nations spiritually. The New Testament emphasizes this grace-based aspect of the promise. Unfortunately, USBP failed to address adequately these facts. Despite what Romans plainly teaches, it even denied that the church fulfilled the promise.⁶ Therefore, our book's perspective was not that of the New Testament.

As the Dust of the Earth

Another verse that was misunderstood was Genesis 28: 14. The book argued that this verse proved God's promise of many nations was referring to the large nation-states of today, because God promised that those nations would be extremely populous — far more populous than the nations of Abraham's day. The context of Genesis 28: 14 is Jacob's dream at Bethel when he was fleeing from his brother Esau. This famous passage includes the story of the ladder reaching up to heaven, on which the angels ascended and descended. God speaks to Jacob and promises that "Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south."

USBP went on to say, "Here the size of the `many nations' is compared to the number of grains of dust of the earth. Elsewhere God compared the population of these promised nations to the grains of sand on a seashore and to the stars — uncountable for multitude."⁷ It added that we must look for fulfillment of these promises apart from the Jews. "We must do it or deny God's promise!"⁸

Yet as we have seen, God has fulfilled the many-nations promise among several different peoples identified in the Bible. Those peoples include the Jews. The same is true of the promise in Genesis 28: 14, for in 1 Kings 4: 20 we read, "The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy." And Deuteronomy 1: 10 says, "The Lord your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as many as the stars in the sky." Other verses speak of Israel as being as numerous as the stars of heaven (Deuteronomy 10: 22; 28: 62; Nehemiah 9: 23). These verses prove that God kept his promises to Abraham, yet USBP does not mention these verses.

To the West, East, North and South

There is another aspect of Genesis 28: 14: the promise that Jacob's descendants would spread out "to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south." The Bible also describes this fulfillment.

God gave Jacob this promise at Bethel. That site later played an important role during Israel's conquest of Canaan. Israel first conquered Jericho, then Ai and the neighboring community of Bethel (Joshua 8: 9, 17, 22). Having secured this foothold in the heart of the Promised Land, Israel proceeded to conquer territory to the west, east, north and south.

A Multitude of Nations

Some may ask, What of the promises to Ephraim and Manasseh? Was not the tribe of Ephraim promised that they would become "a multitude of nations"? And was not Manasseh promised that they would become "a great people"? Does this not prove they were the ancestors of the United States and Britain? Genesis 48: 19 contains the promises to Ephraim and Manasseh. It reads, "He [Manasseh]...will become a people, and he...will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother [Ephraim] will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group [or multitude {KJV}] of nations."

How are we to understand these promises?

The story of the boys' blessing begins in Genesis 48: 1 with the family of Israel in Egypt. Jacob, near death, calls his son Joseph to him. Jacob reflects back on how God has blessed him: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and will increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.' "

In the above reflection, we clearly see that Jacob believed God's promises would be fulfilled in the land of Canaan, not in some other far-off land. It is to Canaan that he focuses the family's attention. He wants them to understand that they are not going to stay in Egypt, but will instead inherit Canaan. Later in this account, after blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, he again associates this promise with them: "God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers" (Genesis 48: 21). They were to go to Canaan, not a far-off isle. Joshua later confirmed that the tribal promises were fulfilled in the land of Canaan (Joshua 23: 14).

Jacob also understands that he is to have many more descendants than those presently in his family. His descendants are to become "a community of peoples." Israel will be both prosperous and fruitful.

Therefore, Jacob tells Joseph that he wishes his grandsons to share in these promises. Though their mother may be Egyptian, they are not to be cut off from the family heritage. God has chosen them as well.

With this background we can properly understand the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh.

As Jacob begins to bless his grandsons he adopts them into the family (i.e., he places not only his name on them, but also the names of his ancestors). He then

asks that "they increase greatly upon the earth" (Genesis 48: 16). The significance of this latter blessing will become more apparent as we study the account further.

Let's discuss Manasseh first. You may have noticed that God's promise to him did not involve statehood. It simply said that his descendants would become a "great people." And they did. This is simply a variation of the earlier blessing found in verse 16. In successive generations their population flourished. Even before leaving Egypt, they (as did all the Israelites) had a tremendous birth rate (Exodus 1:7). The territories Manasseh later inhabited in Canaan enabled them to become one of the most powerful and prosperous tribes in Israel. In so blessing them, God fulfilled his promise.

The same is true of Ephraim. While initially a smaller tribe than Manasseh, by the days of Hosea, Ephraim came to represent the whole house of Israel. Ephraim had indeed succeeded his brother in wealth, power, influence and population. Just as God promised, Manasseh's younger brother became greater than he.

But what of the phrase group of nations? some might ask. Surely the tribe Ephraim did not fulfill that during biblical times?

Actually, it did.

We've already established that the word nation may refer to a distinct group of people sharing a common heritage. It does not always imply statehood. With that in mind, let's consider the following.

Old Testament Hebrew scholars explain Genesis 48: 19 by first recognizing that the prepositional phrase of nations modifies the noun group (or multitude). In other words, because nations modifies group (and not the other way around), Jacob was commenting on the size of Ephraim's future population, not the abundance of nations to come from him.

Let's illustrate this further.

The word translated in Genesis 48: 19 as group or multitude can have the sense of fullness. (See the margin of the Oxford edition of the King James Bible). Because of this, some translators feel the passage would be better rendered: "His [Ephraim's] seed will become the fullness of nations." Or to put it in other words, Ephraim would become very populous — so populous that they would be like the fullness of nations.

The Anchor Bible volume on Genesis puts it this way: "His offspring shall suffice for nations."⁹

This interpretation fits with what we have already observed. Remember how Abraham's children were to become as many as the sand of the sea, or the stars of heaven? Yet we saw how, even before they entered the Promised Land, they had already attained that size. It would appear that the fullness of nations is a step below

that. Therefore, we need look no further than the history of Israel as told in the Bible to find God faithfully keeping his promises to the patriarchs.

Notice what the Commentary on the Old Testament by Keil and Delitzsch has to say about this.

This blessing began to be fulfilled from the time of the Judges, when the tribe of Ephraim so increased in extent and power, that it took the lead of the northern tribes and became the head of the ten tribes, and its name acquired equal importance with the name Israel, whereas under Moses, Manasseh had numbered 20,000 more than Ephraim (Numbers 26: 34, 37).¹⁰

The Bible does not say that Manasseh would become the United States. Nor does it say that Ephraim would become the British Commonwealth. To conclude otherwise would be to read something into the Bible that is not there.

Israel's Biblical History

Now that we have examined some prophetic verses foundational to the Anglo-Israelite belief, let's take time to rehearse the biblical history of Israel, beginning with the death of Solomon. In doing so we will examine typical Anglo-Israelite interpretations of these events. As with the prophetic verses, we will not attempt to examine each and every historic claim made by Anglo-Israelites, but instead we will discuss certain key events. These key events and their interpretation shall help us see if Anglo-Israelism has any historic basis.

After the death of Solomon, Israel split into two nations. The southern tribes, loyal to the royal family, became the house of Judah with Jerusalem as its capital. The northern tribes rebelled and became the house of Israel. They eventually made Samaria their capital. Jeroboam led the northern rebellion, becoming Israel's king. To solidify his power he destroyed the influence of the Levites, the priestly tribe who had remained loyal to God's religion centered at the temple in Jerusalem. To counter the attractive influence of God's annual Holy Days, he created his own pagan state religion complete with its own festivals.

Decades passed, during which time God sent prophets who called Israel to repent and who warned them of the consequences if they did not. While there always remained a remnant in Israel faithful to God, the majority never heeded God's warnings. So in 725 B.C., God moved the Assyrians to begin a three-year siege of Samaria. That siege led to the fall of the city and the captivity of the nation. Following their custom, the Assyrians resettled conquered Israelites elsewhere in the empire, while they transplanted other subjugated peoples to the land of Israel.

Once the Israelites were resettled, the Assyrians took deliberate steps to assimilate them into their general population.

According to the author(s) of 2 Kings 17: 6 and 18: 11, Israelites were carried away into exile to Halah, Gozan on the banks of the Habur and to the cities of

the Medes. The search for traces of this Assyrian exile confirmed this report. There are consequently no reasons to doubt its historicity. From the evidence surveyed it can be added that Israelites were incorporated into the Assyrian army and that some deportees were brought to cities in the Assyrian heartlands. (Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* [Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1992], 92)

This Assyrian policy of deliberate assimilation worked. Within a few decades, all evidence for any distinctive Israelite population within Assyria vanished.

House of Israel — All Captive?

Fundamental to the Anglo-Israel argument is the belief that all significant parts of the house of Israel went into captivity. Biblical and archeological scholars harbor serious doubts about the accuracy of this view. They generally believe that the biblical and archeological evidence proves that many Israelites did not go into captivity, but remained in the land. These Israelites then either mixed with the new gentile immigrants or became a significant part of the southern nation of Judah.

Let's think about this for a moment, starting not with the captivity, but the apostasy of Jeroboam. What happened in Israel when Jeroboam tried to crush God's revealed religion?

History gives many examples of religious persecution. Often we see that those who value their faith choose flight or emigration rather than surrender to religious oppression. Was the situation in Israel any different?

The Bible records what happened. When Jeroboam tried to suppress the faith, there was a massive movement of Israelites southward into Judah. Every tribe was represented in this mass migration.

The Levites...abandoned their pasturelands and property, and came to Judah and Jerusalem because Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them as priests of the Lord.... Those from every tribe of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the Lord, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the Lord, the God of their fathers. They strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam son of Solomon three years [until Rehoboam temporarily abandoned God thereby losing their political support]. (2 Chronicles 11:13-16)

Later, during Asa's reign over Judah:

He repaired the altar of the Lord that was in front of the portico of the Lord's temple. Then he assembled all Judah and Benjamin and the people from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who had settled among them, for large numbers had come over to him from Israel when they saw that the Lord his God was with him. (2 Chronicles 15:8c-9)

USBP claimed there were only a few individuals "who for religion separated from their tribes and lived in Judah and became Jews."¹¹ Yet it now appears that large numbers of Israelites immigrated to Judah and became Jews. Not all of their reasons were religious. Some were refugees from the Assyrian invasion.

Archeological evidence discovered over the past two decades supports this conclusion. Archaeologists now recognize a sudden and significant increase in Jerusalem's population at the time of the northern kingdom's fall. "After the fall of Samaria many refugees from the Northern Kingdom migrated south and settled in Judah, including Jerusalem. The increase in population of Jerusalem accounts for the expansion of Jerusalem westward at that time."¹²

Additional evidence from archeological surveys and excavations has led some scholars to conclude that other areas of Judah experienced this influx of Israelites as well.¹³ When USBP was first published, this archeological evidence had yet to be discovered. Now that it has, it cannot be ignored. From the evidence at Jerusalem alone, we can safely conclude that the Israelite presence in Judah was much greater than previously thought.

There is also evidence that Assyria did not carry all of the Israelites into captivity. Some Israelites continued to dwell in the land after their brothers were exiled.

Consider what we read in Chronicles.

Long after the Assyrian invasion, Josiah, king of Judah, to finance the rebuilding of the temple, collected taxes "from the people of Manasseh, Ephraim and the entire remnant of Israel" (2 Chronicles 34:9). Yet according to USBP, this could not have happened, because no Israelites were left in those areas from whom Josiah could have collected taxes.

Soon after this taxation, Josiah celebrated a grand Passover at Jerusalem:

The Israelites who were present celebrated the Passover at that time and observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days.... [N]one of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 35:17-18)

How could this be if everyone from the northern tribes had been carried away?

The Tribe of Judah Alone?

Yes, the Bible does say, "So the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left" (2 Kings 17:18). What does this mean? If it means what Anglo-Israelites take it to mean, that no significant Israelite population remained behind after the Assyrian invasion, how do we explain the previous evidence that shows otherwise? Do we discard it? Ignore it? Or do we reexamine our presuppositions about what we think this scripture says?

At face value, the verse appears to say that only the tribe of Judah escaped captivity. Yet we have already shown that most Levites had moved southward into Judah two centuries earlier and had therefore escaped Assyrian captivity as well. We have also seen that large numbers from other northern tribes also migrated southward.

Furthermore, the house of Judah did not encompass just the tribe of Judah. Its territory included land allotted to Simeon and Benjamin.¹⁴ Its population was mixed. In recounting the division of Israel, 1 Kings tells us that Rehoboam, king of Judah, continued to reign over the "Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah," and that to stop the rebellion "he mustered the whole house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin." Before the fighting began, "This word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: `Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah, to the whole house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people.... Do not fight against your brothers, the Israelites" (1 Kings 12: 17, 21-24). Therefore, because the house of Judah included the tribes of Benjamin, Simeon and Judah — not just Judah alone — all these tribes escaped Assyrian captivity. (Remember, the apostle Paul was a Benjamite.)

To repeat a point made earlier, we have also proven that significant representatives of Levi, Ephraim, Manasseh and all the other northern tribes kept the Passover in Jerusalem long after Samaria's fall. Therefore, what does the phrase "there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone" mean? Does it contradict these plain facts?

When God inspired his servants to write the Bible, he inspired them to use the vocabulary, literary styles and modes of expression commonly in use during the time he inspired each book. He also allowed for the personality of each book's author to have free expression. That is why Isaiah does not read like Jeremiah, or 1 Peter like 1 Corinthians. That is why the Bible does not read like books written in our day. Styles and modes of expression have changed.

Common to every language are figures of speech, which, if unrecognized by readers, will cause them to misunderstand the subtleties of what they are reading. Some languages are richer in the number of figures of speech than others. E.W. Bullinger in his classic work *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* identified 217 types of figures of speech found in the Scriptures. Bullinger states in his work's introduction:

A figure denotes some form which a word or sentence takes, different from its ordinary and natural form. This is always for the purpose of giving additional force, more life, intensified feeling and greater emphasis. Whereas today "Figurative language" is ignorantly spoken of as though it made less of the meaning, and deprived the words of their power and force. A passage of God's Word is quoted: and it is met with the cry, "Oh, that is figurative" — implying that its meaning is weakened, or that it has quite a different meaning, or that it has no meaning at all. But the very opposite is the case. For an unusual form (figura) is never used except to add force to the truth conveyed, emphasis to the statement of it, and depth to the meaning of it.¹⁵

One common type of figure of speech that God used in the Bible is synecdoche (the practice of referring to the whole by reference to one of its parts, e.g., "Washington")

for the United States, "London" for England, "Ephraim" for all Israel). Bullinger defines this type of figure as "the exchange of one idea for another associated idea."¹⁶ For a figure to be a synecdoche there must be an internal association between the two ideas. For example, in Isaiah 7 Ephraim is used figuratively for the whole house of Israel. Because the tribe of Ephraim is a part of the house of Israel, there is an internal association of the terms. Therefore, when Ephraim is used figuratively for Israel, Ephraim is a synecdoche. Specifically, it is a synecdoche of the part, meaning a part has been put for the whole.¹⁷

The inspired author of Kings used a synecdoche of the part more than once. For example, 1 Kings 11:32 says that the royal house of David would rule over only one tribe. Yet from other scriptures we know that Benjamin, Levi and Simeon are included in this number. So here the "one tribe" is a synecdoche for all those who associated with the house of David. In this passage, the writer does not mean to deceive, but to emphasize the great loss David's house would suffer at the rebellion of the other tribes. In 1 Kings 12:20 we read another example of synecdoche when Judah is identified as that one tribe. That verse reads, "Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the house of David." Yet the historic fact is that other tribes remained loyal as well. Judah is a synecdoche representing all of them.

Those unfamiliar with synecdoche might assume that such passages prove the Bible contradictory and historically unreliable. Yet as Bullinger points out, those familiar with the richness of ancient Hebrew literary figures would never make such a claim.

The relevance of this discussion is now obvious, for we just read in 1 Kings 12:20 that "only the tribe of Judah remained loyal." That synecdoche is similar to the one in 2 Kings 17:18 that reads "Only the tribe of Judah was left." We have already seen that many members of the other tribes remained, including significant representatives of the two principal tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. Therefore, 2 Kings 17:18 is an example of synecdoche. The verse is talking about kingdoms, not the people who lived in the kingdoms. Only the southern kingdom, here called "the tribe of Judah" continued to exist. USBP failed to address these facts.

In the years following Josiah's reign, the northern tribes continued to grow in influence within Judah. The Bible records that Jews and Israelites were still living side by side in the days of the early church. Israelites were major players in the life of the southern nation, having significant economic, political and religious roles.

What evidence do we have for this? Besides the already cited account of Josiah's reign, we have the added word of the prophets.

Jeremiah's Witness

Jeremiah warned both houses of Israel that they would soon be carried into Babylonian captivity. His contemporary Ezekiel, who was carried into Babylon in the first wave of that captivity, also addressed both peoples. He challenged those Israelites still in Jerusalem, who complacently thought they had escaped the Babylonian scourge, to repent. The worst was yet to come.

Both prophets spoke of the house of Israel as a major portion of the Jewish people.

From Jeremiah:

Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, all you clans of the house of Israel.... I bring charges against you again.... As a thief is disgraced when he is caught, so the house of Israel is disgraced — they, their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets. They say to wood, "You are my father," and to stone, "You gave me birth." They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, "Come and save us!" Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah. (Jeremiah 2: 4, 9, 26-28)

In the above quotation Jeremiah refers to Israel and Judah as one people, the people of Judah. They are his contemporaries and are about to be punished for their sins. That does not mean that he was unaware of what happened to the northern nation. He recalls their captivity in Jeremiah 3:6-8. However, that does not diminish the truth that he also addressed many Israelites then dwelling in Judah. By Jeremiah's day they had begun to be one people. Notice the following quotes:

Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares. If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city.... "Should I not punish them for this?" declares the Lord. "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this? Go through her vineyards and ravage them, but do not destroy them completely. Strip off her branches, for these people [living in Jerusalem] do not belong to the Lord. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly unfaithful to me," declares the Lord....

They have lied about the Lord; they said, "He will do nothing!"... Therefore this is what the Lord God Almighty says: "Because the people have spoken these words, I will make my words in your [Jeremiah's] mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes. O house of Israel," declares the Lord, "I am bringing a distant nation [Babylon] against you.... Announce this to the house of Jacob and proclaim it in Judah.... Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?" (Jeremiah 5:1, 9b-15, 20, 29)

The book of Jeremiah tells how he warned the Israelite and Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem about their coming Babylonian captivity. Therefore, Jeremiah attests to a significant remnant of the house of Israel dwelling among Judah (a fact we shall see confirmed in Ezekiel).

Flee for safety, people of Benjamin! Flee from Jerusalem!... For disaster looms out of the north.... Cut down the trees and build siege ramps against Jerusalem. This city must be punished.... Let them glean the remnant of Israel as thoroughly as a vine. (Jeremiah 6: 1-9)

Hear what the Lord says to you, O house of Israel... Gather up your belongings to leave the land, you who live under siege. For this is what the Lord says: "At this time I will hurl out those who live in this land [the land of Judah]; I will bring distress on them so that they may be captured."... Listen! The report is coming — a great commotion from the land of the north! It will make the towns of Judah desolate, a haunt of jackals. (Jeremiah 10: 1, 17-18, 22)

Then the Lord said to me, "There is a conspiracy among the people of Judah and those who live in Jerusalem. They have returned to the sins of their forefathers.... They have followed other gods to serve them. Both the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken the covenant I made with their forefathers. Therefore...I will bring on them [both houses] a disaster.... The towns of Judah and the people of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they burn incense.... The house of Israel and the house of Judah have done evil and provoked me to anger by burning incense to Baal." (Jeremiah 11: 9-12, 17)

Remember the famous passage in Jeremiah inspired by his visit to the potter's house?

"O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned...."

"Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem...` I am preparing a disaster for you.... So turn from your evil ways.'" (Jeremiah 18: 6-11)

The house of Israel, the people of Judah, the clay in the potter's hand are all one and the same. The disaster that Jeremiah prophesied for Jerusalem was to come on them all, for they all lived together in that city.

Yet Jeremiah also gave those people hope by announcing God's promise of a new covenant. These two houses, sharing in one national calamity, later share in one national restoration.

"The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers.... This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts." (Jeremiah 31: 31-33)

Notice: God first promises that he'll make this new covenant with both houses. Then, in describing that covenant, he only mentions the house of Israel. In this context God applies the name house of Israel to all of Israel, not just the "lost tribes."

The point of the above, and all the previous citations from Jeremiah, is this: Jeremiah bears witness to Israelites and Jews living together in the towns of Judah before the captivity. Naturally this led to the terms Israelite and Jew being applied to all Israelites no matter what tribe they were from technically.

Ezekiel's Commission

Ezekiel testifies to the same. Written before the final fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians, the book of Ezekiel proclaimed Israel's inevitable doom. "Go now to the house of Israel," God ordered (Ezekiel 3:4) (rather than over 2,500 years later through the church, as USBP stated).

God commanded this knowing that once they heard what Ezekiel would say to them, they would not listen (verse 7).

As God gave Ezekiel his commission, he described at least some of the house of Israel as Ezekiel's fellow exiles to whom he could speak directly (verse 11). These Israelites lived with him at Tel Abib near the Kebar River in Babylon, not in far away Assyria (verse 15).

God said that Ezekiel would remain mute, except as God moved him to prophesy (verses 24-27). During this time, Ezekiel was only able to speak when he prophesied directly to members of the "rebellious house" (identified early in chapter 3 as the house of Israel). Apparently his message would so enrage the house of Israel that God warned Ezekiel that leaders of the house of Israel would tie him up with ropes to prevent him from circulating among them (verses 25-26).

Chapter 4 tells of Ezekiel building a model of Jerusalem around which he portrayed the final Babylonian siege. Through this symbolism, God warned the house of Israel that they would suffer horribly in Jerusalem's fall.

In chapter 8 God reveals the spiritual decay that corrupted even the temple. There the house of Israel openly practiced idolatry. In exposing this sin, Ezekiel names names. A contemporary of his, Jaazaniah son of Shaphan, joined with leading members of the house of Israel in this defilement (Ezekiel 8:3-11). In response God decreed that he would fill the temple with the slain. "Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children.... Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain" (Ezekiel 9:6-7).

Ezekiel cries in anguish

"Ah, Sovereign Lord! Are you going to destroy the entire remnant of Israel in this outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?" God answered, "The sin of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. They say, 'The Lord has forsaken the land; the Lord does not see.' So I will not look on them with pity or spare them, but I will bring down on their own head what they have done." (verses 8b-10)

Chapter 9 is particularly important because it is one of the few places where Ezekiel mentions the house of Judah. This handful of scriptures proves that Ezekiel knew the difference between the house of Israel and the house of Judah. These peoples lived together, both in Jerusalem and in the Babylonian captivity.

Continuing the story in chapter 10, we see God removing his glory from the temple. He then proceeds to give Ezekiel another glimpse into the continued perversions found there. At Jerusalem's gate there were

twenty-five men...among them Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. The Lord said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who are plotting evil and giving wicked advice in this city.

"O house of Israel...I know what is going through your mind. You have killed many people in this city and filled its streets with the dead." (Ezekiel 11: 1-2, 6b)

As Ezekiel spoke this prophecy to the house of Israel, Pelatiah, one of the men in the vision, died. Ezekiel cried, "Ah, Sovereign Lord! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?"

Additional evidence from chapters 12 through 34 supports this conclusion: A significant and influential remnant of the house of Israel lived in Judah and shared in its fall and captivity.

Therefore, when the Jews returned out of Babylon, members of the house of Israel probably returned with them. By the days of Nebuchadnezzar, Israelites and Jews formed one nation, the nation of Judah.

The failure to recognize this biblical history and its implications is a major failing of all Anglo-Israelite literature, including our own.

The Days of Ezra and Nehemiah

The story does not stop there. During the days of Ezra, Cyrus gave the Jews leave to return to Judah and rebuild the temple. Elders of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi led this return (Ezra 1:5). After arriving, the returnees called themselves both the people of Judah and the people of Israel. The terms were interchangeable (Ezra 4: 3-4). Ezra himself became known as "a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given.... For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel" (Ezra 7: 6, 10).

Ezra returned to Judea with the blessing of Artaxerxes, who had decreed, "that any of the Israelites in my kingdom...who may wish to go to Jerusalem with you, may go" (Ezra 7: 13). Upon their return they sacrificed as a sin offering "twelve bulls for all Israel" (Ezra 8: 35).

Later, when Nehemiah arrived, the Jews decided to repopulate Jerusalem with one-tenth their number. "Now some Israelites, priests, Levites, temple servants and descendants of Solomon's servants lived in the towns of Judah, each on his own property in the various towns, while other people from both Judah and Benjamin lived in Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 11: 3-4). The word Israelite in this context does not prove what tribes they descended from. It does prove that by this time Israel and Judah were interchangeable. This should not surprise us once we have recognized the great influx of Israelites into Judah that had occurred before the Babylonian captivity.

During his governorship, Nehemiah became concerned with the flagrant Sabbath-breaking among the people. He later wrote,

I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this wicked thing you are doing — desecrating the Sabbath day? Didn't your forefathers do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity upon us and upon this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath." (Nehemiah 13: 17-18)

Israel and Judah Rebuild the Temple

The final Old Testament book that contributes to our historical understanding of this subject is Zechariah. Contemporary to Ezra, he and Haggai urged the reluctant Jews to rebuild the temple. In chapter 8, God spoke of his jealousy for Jerusalem. He inspired his listeners with descriptions of the messianic peace he would bring to the city. To the skeptical Jews he responded,

It may seem marvelous to the remnant of this people at this time, but will it seem marvelous to me?... You who now hear these words spoken by the prophets...let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built.... As you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah and Israel, so will I save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong. (Zechariah 8: 6, 9-13)

From the above we can see that the prophet Zechariah understood that God urged both houses of Israel to rebuild the temple. That could only occur if both houses dwelt as one among the people we now call the Jews.

Zechariah also marks a turning point in biblical terminology. It is the last place that our Christian Bibles say Jews are of the house of Judah (Zechariah 12: 4).¹⁸ By the New Testament period, house of Judah had become an anachronism.¹⁹

The New Testament Evidence

We are now ready to examine the New Testament evidence.

Jesus said of his own commission, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24 NRSV²⁰). What did Jesus mean when he said that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel?

Clearly we are dealing with an analogy. Jesus was sent to people, not livestock. People are the lost sheep of Israel.

Did he mean that he was sent to a land far-distant from Judea and Galilee to which the "lost tribes" had migrated? No, for his entire ministry was among the Jews of Judea and Galilee. It was to the Jews only that he was sent. Therefore, from that fact alone we can learn that Jesus himself referred to the Jews as the house of Israel. The Jews were the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

In what sense then were these sheep of Israel lost? Certainly they were not lost geographically. The whole Roman Empire knew where the Jews came from. Nor were they lost to history. Nor had they lost their identity. In none of these senses were the Jews of Christ's day lost. How then were they lost?

The house of Israel was lost spiritually.

The word translated as lost in Matthew 15:24 is *apollumi*. It may also be translated as perish and destroy. For example, one form of this verb is translated as perish in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Another form of the verb is translated destroy in Matthew 10:28, "Be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

The word may be used in the sense of being spiritually lost. We use the English word lost in that same sense in the hymn "Amazing Grace" when we sing, "I once was lost but now am found."

Jesus' Parable of the Lost Sheep can be found in Matthew 18:11-14. In this parable he uses a shepherd's loving search for a lost sheep to describe God's care for children who love him. "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost."

As Jesus traveled through Jericho on his final trip to Jerusalem he spoke with Zacchaeus the tax collector. Zacchaeus expressed his faith in Christ by repenting of his sins and following Jesus' instruction to give to the poor. On hearing this Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:9). Once again, a form of the verb *apollumi* is used.

Therefore, after we consider all the evidence, we realize that when Jesus said he came only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he meant that he came to the spiritually lost Jews.

This helps us properly understand Jesus' pre-crucifixion commission to the 12 apostles mentioned in Matthew 10:6: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel." These were the same sheep to whom he had been sent — the Jews. The parallel accounts of this commission in Mark 6 and Luke 9, along with their contexts, prove the apostles fulfilled this commission during Jesus' earthly ministry. Luke 9:6, 10 tell us that they "went from village to village preaching the gospel" and "they reported to Jesus what they had done."

After his resurrection Jesus broadened this commission to include the entire world (Matthew 28:19-20). Acts tells us how the apostles and others preached the gospel first to Jews, then to Samaritans and finally to gentiles.

The House of Israel in Acts

As one reads Acts it becomes apparent that the church understood that the Jews were the house of Israel. The church did not look for Israelites among any other people.

Peter, when he stood to preach his famous Pentecost sermon, cried out, "Fellow Jews and all of you who are in Jerusalem!" (Acts 2:14). These Jews he later called "men of Israel" and "brothers" (Acts 2:22, 29).

He preached to them that "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." The NIV tells us that he wanted all of Israel to know this, but the NRSV is more revealing, and more accurate: "Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:36).

The Jewish people included significant members of all the tribes. They therefore took their national name, Israel.

Interpretations of prophecies about Israel that fail to account for how Christ and the church referred to the Jews as the house of Israel are flawed. Unfortunately, USBP did not adequately address such issues.

The New Testament uses Israel and Jews interchangeably. In the New Testament, if one is an Israelite, one is a Jew, and vice versa. It was once true that not all Israelites were Jews. But by Jesus' day, as the New Testament reflects, Israelites from all 12 tribes were referred to as Jews.

The book of Acts records that the apostles addressed their countrymen in terms that do not fit in with the explanations found in USBP. Time and again, the Jewish apostles called members of their ethnic group Israelites.

How often have we heard the claim that the modern state of Israel is misnamed, for the people there "aren't Israelites at all, but Jews"? Yet what did the early church call these people?

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!... Know this, you and everyone else in Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified...that this man stands before you completely healed." (Acts 4:10)

Whom did Peter say crucified Christ? The rulers, the elders, and everyone else in Israel!

Later, a church prayer mentioned that "Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city [Jerusalem] to conspire against your holy servant Jesus" (Act 4:27). Yes, in Jesus' day, people of Israel lived in Jerusalem.

When God began calling the uncircumcised, Peter said, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. This is the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:34-35).

Luke, in writing his Gospel, wrote that John the Baptist "lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel" (Luke 1:80).

John records that Jesus said of Nicodemus, "You are Israel's teacher" (John 3:10). You'll recall that Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, called the Jewish ruling council in John 3:1, but described as the "full assembly of the elders of Israel" in Acts 5:21.

There is no evidence that the apostles and Christ were merely bowing to custom when they called Jews Israelites. Of course that was the custom, but that custom was based on historic facts. As we have seen, Jesus himself called the Jews Israel in his description of Nicodemus, in his description of his own mission and in his first commission to the 12 apostles.

Later, when Christ called Paul, he described him as "my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). What follows in Acts is a telling of how Paul fulfilled his commission. He went first to the Jews, who were the people of Israel, and then to the others.

When Paul preached in the synagogue of the Pisidian Antioch he said,

Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers.... God gave them judges.... Then the people asked for a king.... After removing Saul, he made David their king.... From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. (Acts 13:16b-24)

Paul did not mean that John literally preached to all the people of Israel anymore than 2 Kings 17:20 meant that Assyria carried all Israel into captivity. Paul simply meant that vast numbers of Israelites heard John's message.

Notice again, Paul called the Jews Israel. He consistently held this view. The thought that someone other than the Jews could still be called physical Israel was totally alien to all the apostles.

One passage must be particularly hard to explain if one insists that God considers the "lost tribes" a part of the United States and Britain. Again, the words are from the apostle Paul.

King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies....

The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child.... I lived as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? (Acts 26:2-8, 22-23).

From this appeal we learn that in Paul's day the 12 tribes, not just Judah, Benjamin and Levi, but all the 12 tribes, worshipped God. In Paul's day they continued to look for the fulfillment of God's promises to them, especially the resurrection of the dead.

By the New Testament period, only the Jews could claim to be the legitimate remnants of the 12 tribes of Israel. The church of the first century looked no further. Why should we?

The significance of this observation is as follows. USBP claimed, since the house of Israel went into captivity and were subsequently lost, that none of the prophecies about them could be fulfilled by Judah. Yet because Judah contained large numbers of Israelites, this interpretation is highly suspect. We should not be dogmatic about it, because the Bible does not prove it. We should not endorse the unscriptural and insupportable conclusions of USBP.

As we commented early in this paper, we wish to fulfill the commission Christ gave to us. That commission has nothing to do with national identities. It has everything to do with eternal salvation and Christian discipleship.

Endnotes

¹John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity Interpreted Through Its Development*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 106.

²The United States and Britain in Prophecy [hereafter called USBP] (Pasadena, California: Worldwide Church of God, 1986), 87.

³Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, Frank E. Gaebelein, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1986), 845.

⁴S. Fisch, *Ezekiel, The Soncino Books of the Bible*, A. Cohen, ed. (New York: The Soncino Press, 1985), 141.

⁵USBP, 20.

⁶USBP, 19.

⁷USBP, 22.

⁸USBP, 23.

⁹E.A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 356.

¹⁰C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, "The Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus 1-11," James Martin, trans. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1989), 384-5).

¹¹USBP, 70.

¹²"Geography, history and archaeology," *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford University Press, 1991, 414). For more detailed information read "Jerusalem," *The New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Vol. 2 (Israel Exploration Society and Carta, Simon and Schuster, 1993), 704-9. From the latter we quote, "It seems that refugees flocked to Jerusalem from Samaria and the surrounding countryside.... Presently available excavation results provide ample evidence for the growth of Jerusalem's population and concomitant increase in area."

¹³Avi Ofer, though disagreeing, admits the "theoretical possibility that these sites [in the Judean hills] were founded toward the end of the eighth century BCE (after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel?)." If so, that leads to the possibility that their founding may be attributed to Israelite immigration, just as the sudden growth of Jerusalem's population was at that same time (Avi Ofer, "Judean Hills Survey," *The New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Vol. 2, 816).

The same encyclopedia has an article on Jericho by Kathleen M. Kenyon. She notes that "in the seventh century BCE...there was an extensive occupation of the ancient site," where little archeological evidence for an occupation from the immediately preceding centuries exists (Kathleen M. Kenyon, "Jericho," *The New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Vol. 2, 680, cp. the article "Jericho" in

The New Anchor Bible Dictionary). Why Jericho should become more prominent in that century is not explained. Could it be further evidence of a significant increase in population in Judah following Samaria's fall?

While it is admitted that the meaning of the evidence outside of Jerusalem is debatable, Anglo-Israelites should not ignore the fact that archeology now raises serious doubts as to their interpretation of events.

¹⁴Remember, Simeon was scattered throughout Israel. Bible atlases often show Simeonite territory to have been centered in southern Judah, while Benjamin formed the northern border of the house of Judah (Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, The Macmillan Bible Atlas: Revised Edition [New York: Macmillan, 1977], maps #68, 70, 82, 118, 147, 151).

¹⁵E.W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993), v-vi.

¹⁶Bullinger, 613.

¹⁷Bullinger, 640.

¹⁸The last place in the Hebrew Bible where the term house of Judah appears is 2 Chronicles 22: 10.

¹⁹There is a quotation of Jeremiah 31:31 used in Hebrews 8:8, which mentions the house of Judah. However, by the time Hebrews was written, the book of Jeremiah was over 500 years old. Therefore its citation in Hebrews is no more an example of usual Herodian Jewish vocabulary than a quotation from Shakespeare would be of modern English vocabulary. The truth is that by the time of Jesus Christ, biblical writers, except when quoting ancient texts, do not refer to the Jews even once as the house of Judah. (For verification check The NRSV Exhaustive Concordance.)

²⁰Unfortunately the NIV leaves out the words house of, even though they are in the Greek text. The NRSV retains those words.

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