12 Tribes of Israel

by David Register

What promises did God make to the 12 tribes of Israel? What were His plans and expectations for them? What is the significance of these things today?

“I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore” (Genesis 22:17).

One of the great mysteries of the Bible and history is the identity of the 12 tribes of Israel.

We may easily identify them in the early pages of Bible history. We can read about the division and destruction of the Israelite Empire and, later, the Jewish nation in the pages of the Bible and secular history.

But what happened to the descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel? What is the “birthright” promise? Were the promises and prophecies about the 12 sons of Israel fulfilled?
Is it important for us to know who and where they are today? Is the Jewish nation of Israel the descendants of all 12 tribes? Who and where are the “lost tribes of Israel”? Did God intend for the Church to replace Israel?

The articles in this section will explore these questions and more. The information is not just to fulfill intellectual curiosity. The answers can help you understand God’s plan and His faithfulness to His promises. It can give you insight and assurance of the future God has planned for the 12 tribes of Israel and all mankind.

http://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/12-tribes-of-israel/

Chart produced by Paul Luecke; layout by James Followell Jr.

Promises to Abraham

by David Treybig

God gave incredible promises to Abraham and his descendants. But did choosing these people mean God didn’t love others or that He was a racist?

The promises God made to Abraham are quite astounding. Based upon Abraham’s faith and obedience, God said, “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).

From this foundational conversation between God and Abraham, the blessings poured out on this man’s descendants have been enormous. Ranging from land to countless descendants to natural resources to strategic gates of commerce to military strength, the recipients of these God-given blessings have enjoyed a standard of living and prominence far above many other nations (Genesis 12:7; 22:17; 49:24-26).

Even after Christ’s death, Paul understood that the promises to Abraham continued. In writing to gentiles (those not of Jewish or Israelite background), Paul spoke of “covenants of promise” that remained for those who were part of “the commonwealth of Israel” (Ephesians 2:12). As the descendants of the ancient Israelites, the peoples of northwest Europe and the United States continue to enjoy the blessings of their ancestor Abraham. (See the other articles in this section for more details about the modern descendants of Abraham.)

God is fair
Given these blessings that God has bestowed upon Abraham’s descendants, some have claimed that acknowledgment of this history is racist and disrespectful of other peoples and nations. But this does not make God a racist. God will have “mercy on whom He wills” (Romans 9:18). Furthermore, God loves all of His creation and is “not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9). God’s plan of salvation is for all people, regardless of their race (Acts 10:34-36). He simply began working with the nation of Israel first because He began working with their forefather, Abraham.

We should also note that the promises God made to Abraham were to extend to all nations. As God said to Abraham, “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). Through the birth of Jesus to Mary, a descendant of Abraham, this promise has been fulfilled, since Jesus Christ’s life and sacrifice made salvation available to all. And in the future, the nation of Israel is destined to become a model nation showing others how to live and enjoy God’s blessings.

**People aren’t**

People, on the other hand, can be racist. Sadly, some who are aware of God’s blessings upon Abraham’s descendants and who claim to be descendants of this patriarch have wrongly assumed that this makes them superior to others. The Bible teaches that salvation is open to all who heed God’s call to repent of their sins and be baptized for the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

Paul explains this quite clearly: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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” (Galatians 3:27-29).

The bottom line is that God is loving and fair to all peoples. In His plan to offer everyone the opportunity to be part of His eternal family, He simply began working with one man, Abraham, and his descendants. God’s promises to Abraham are a foretaste of the abundance all will enjoy in the future.
Lost Tribes of Israel

by David Treybig

Have some of the tribes of Israel really been lost? When did this perception originate? What does the Bible say about the lost tribes of Israel?

Where can we find the lost tribes of Israel?

The ancient nation of Israel originated from Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28). The descendants of his 12 sons became known as the 12 tribes of Israel (Genesis 35:22). As these people multiplied and the nation of Israel developed, each of these family units represented one of “the divisions of Israel” headed by a man from that tribe (Numbers 1:4; Joshua 22:14).

After the death of King Solomon, the nation divided into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom, which consisted of 10 tribes (1 Kings 11:31), retained the name Israel; and the southern kingdom, which consisted of two tribes, became known as Judah (1 Kings 12:21).

A civil war soon erupted, as the Jews mustered an army to fight against the Israelites for the purpose of restoring all of the tribes under the rule of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. This endeavor failed, and the two nations, representing the Jews and Israelites, never reconciled. However, the Bible says that in the future these peoples will be reconciled. See “Israel and Judah: When Will They Be Reunited?”

Israel disappears as a nation
God sent prophets to the citizens of both Israel and Judah warning them that unless they repented of their sins, their nations would face disaster and they would be taken into captivity. The nation of Israel was toppled by Assyria in 722 B.C. and its citizens were deported (1 Chronicles 5:26; Ezekiel 39:23).

Although a large number of Israelites from three of the tribes comprising the northern kingdom had migrated to Judah because of their nation’s rebellion against God and the punishment that came because of it (2 Chronicles 15:3-6, 9), the vast majority of ancient Israel’s citizens were either killed in battle or deported by the Assyrians. Those taken captive were sent to “Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river Gozan” (1 Chronicles 5:26).

This is the point in history where some of the tribes appear to have been lost. Historians often refer to these people after this time as the “Lost Tribes of Israel” or the “Ten Lost Tribes.”

While most of these people no longer remember their original language, culture, history or religion, there are biblical, linguistic and archaeological clues indicating what happened to them and where they are today. Before continuing our study of what the Bible says about these people, let’s see why the Jews, descendants of the ancient nation of Judah, have not lost their identity.

Jews retain their identity

Because of disobedience to God’s laws, the nation of Judah was taken into captivity by Babylon between 604 and 586 B.C. Prior to their going into captivity, God told the citizens of Judah: “For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10).

After the 70 years had expired, a remnant of the Jewish people returned to their native land and rebuilt the city of Jerusalem and the temple under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah.

One of the reasons the nation of Judah had been punished was for ignoring God’s command to observe the biblical Sabbath, which occurs on the seventh day of the week, Saturday. Recognizing this important principle, Nehemiah enforced Sabbath observance in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13:15-19). This act of worship had been set up by God as a perpetual covenant and as a sign between Him and His people (Exodus 31:13, 16-17).

Through the centuries many Jews ceased to observe the Sabbath and many today no longer observe it. Yet it seems that a portion of the Jewish people has always continued this practice, and the Jewish people retain this understanding as part of their cultural heritage. The result is that unlike the 10 tribes who were part of Israel, the Jews have not lost their identity. Many Jews today reside in the modern State of Israel, but this nation does not include the many descendants of the 10 tribes who previously comprised the kingdom of Israel after Solomon.

Lost tribes of Israel not really lost

While historians have referred to the 10 tribes of Israel that were taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. as the “Lost Tribes of Israel,” these people were not lost to God. Through the prophets, God continued to send messages assuring them that He had not forgotten them. Following the destruction of the ancient nation of Israel, God said, “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 9:9).

During the first century after Christ, writers of the New Testament seemed to know of the existence of all 12 tribes of Israel. Appearing before King Agrippa, Paul spoke of “our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day” (Acts 26:7). James addressed his letter to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1).

Through the sifting process God had foretold through Amos, many of the ancient Israelites migrated to northwest Europe and subsequently became prominent nations in the world today. For more information, see “12 Tribes of Israel Today: Who Are They?”

The future for these so called “Lost Tribes of Israel” is bright. Speaking of these people, God said: “‘Behold, the days are coming … 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).

The lesson for us

While the knowledge of the tribes of Israel is fascinating, the spiritual lesson behind this information is even more important. The point is really quite simple. The history of ancient Israel and Judah teaches us that God provides great blessings to those who obey Him and severe punishment to those who disobey.

God, whose laws and expectations do not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), expects us to obey Him today. This website will help you understand what God wants you to do. Be sure to study it carefully and then begin living what you learn. Your life will be blessed tremendously for doing so.
10 Lost Tribes

by David Treybig

How could 10 of the tribes of Israel be lost? What happened? Why do some people refer to these tribes as the 10 lost tribes?

Although there were originally 12 tribes in the ancient nation of Israel, these family units separated into two kingdoms after the death of King Solomon. In the time leading up to this division, God revealed that 10 of the tribes would unite under Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:29-31), the challenger to Solomon’s son Rehoboam.

As explained in our more extensive article on this subject, “Lost Tribes of Israel,” the 10 tribes that followed Jeroboam retained the name of Israel. The tribes that remained faithful to Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, then became known as Judah. Although the primary tribe was Judah, the smaller tribe of Benjamin was also part of this kingdom (1 Kings 12:23) along with the Levites who remained at the temple in Jerusalem.

Before continuing, let’s briefly note a few things about the tribes that clearly didn’t get lost.

The kingdom of Judah

The name “Judah” was apparently selected as the name of the kingdom that remained faithful to Rehoboam because Judah was the tribe from which King David and his family, including Solomon and Rehoboam, had come (1 Samuel 17:12; 2 Samuel 19:11-12, 41-42; Revelation 5:5). Several passages of the Bible give this indication.
After the death of Saul, the men of Judah were the first to anoint David as king over their tribe (2 Samuel 2:4). At this time, “only the house of Judah followed David” (verse 10). After David had ruled over Judah for seven and a half years, the rest of the tribes finally accepted David as king over them (2 Samuel 5:1-5). During the rebellion led by Sheba, only the tribe of Judah remained faithful to David (2 Samuel 20:2). This loyalty to a family from their tribe was apparently a significant factor in the selection of “Judah” as the name of the nation ruled by Rehoboam.

Although the nation of Judah also committed grievous sins, God promised that He “would not destroy Judah, for the sake of His servant David, as He promised him to give a lamp to him and his sons forever” (2 Kings 8:19).

After 70 years of captivity in Babylon, “the heads of the fathers’ houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:5). The history of the people representing these tribes has been well documented through succeeding years.

**The kingdom of Israel’s demise**

Unlike the history of the kingdom of Judah, information about the tribes that were part of the kingdom of Israel after its fall in 722 B.C. has been so sparse that some have referred to these peoples as the “10 lost tribes.” After being transported to “Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river Gozan” (1 Chronicles 5:26) in the land of Assyria, they seem to almost disappear.

Of course, these 10 tribes aren’t really lost. The descendants of these peoples continue to exist. To learn more about where these so-called “10 lost tribes” are today, be sure to read “Lost Tribes of Israel” and the other articles on this section about the “12 Tribes of Israel.”
The 12 Tribes of Israel in History and Prophecy

by David Treybig

Who were the 12 tribes of Israel, and why are they so important in biblical history and prophecy? What do you need to know about the 12 tribes?

"...the seed shall be prosperous..."

The Bible lists 12 sons of the patriarch Israel who each became the father of a tribe of the ancient nation of Israel. Here is a list of the 12 tribes of Israel from Genesis 49:

- Reuben.
- Simeon.
- Levi (this priestly tribe did not receive a territory, and sometimes is not listed when the tribe of Joseph is listed as two separate tribes).
- Judah.
- Zebulun.
- Issachar.
- Dan.
- Gad.
- Asher.
- Naphtali.
- Joseph (often listed as two tribes named for his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh).
- Benjamin.

Let’s look at what the Bible tells us about the history and the future of the 12 tribes of Israel.
Promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

God promised Abraham that his descendants would be numerous (Genesis 13:16; 17:2; 22:17) and that his descendants would eventually constitute “many nations” (Genesis 17:4-5). He also promised Abraham that his descendants would “possess the gate of their enemies” (Genesis 22:17) and be “blessed” mightily by God (verses 16-18).

God also said that his descendants would be identified throughout history by the name of Abraham’s son, “Isaac” (Genesis 21:12). The blessings given to Abraham and Isaac were called the “birthright” blessings because they were passed on to successive generations as a right of their birth.

The “birthright” blessings given to Abraham were passed on to Isaac, who married Rebekah. Millions of people would descend from Isaac and Rebekah over time. In fact, they would number in the billions throughout the generations of humanity on the earth.

The blessing of numerous descendants who would possess the gates of their enemies was a continuation of the blessing God had promised Abraham that He would fulfill in Isaac (Genesis 17:17-19, 21). However, Abraham had a previous son, Ishmael, by Hagar, and Ishmael’s descendants were also prophesied to become numerous and constitute a “great nation” that would feature “twelve princes” (verse 20).

The “great nation” of Ishmael’s descendants today is the Arab world. The Arabs know that they are descended from Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar.

If the descendants of Ishmael constitute the Arabs, the peoples who make up most of the nations in the modern Middle East, then which nations descended from Isaac? If the Bible is true, Isaac’s descendants should constitute nations more numerous, prosperous and powerful than the Arabs. The Bible is God’s truth (John 17:17)! Obviously, Isaac’s descendants in the modern world must consist of far more than just the Jews. Genesis 24:60 prophesied that Isaac’s descendants would number in the multiple millions over time.

Isaac passed his “birthright” blessings on to his son, Jacob, even though the oldest son, Esau, would normally have received them. Genesis 25:30-34 informs us that Esau “sold” his birthright to Jacob for some red stew. Then when their father, Isaac, officially passed on the birthright, Jacob deceived his father into believing he was his brother. In essence, Jacob “stole” the birthright through deception (Genesis 27).

One of the blessings Jacob received from Isaac was that other nations would bow down to the nations that would descend from Jacob (Genesis 27:29). Clearly, for this prophecy to be fulfilled, Jacob’s descendants would have to become great nations and empires. This same blessing also promised that God would bless the nations that blessed Jacob’s descendants and would curse the nations that cursed Jacob’s descendants.

God reiterated Abraham’s blessings to Jacob in Genesis 28:10-15 by saying Jacob’s descendants would be as numerous as “the dust of the earth” and they would eventually spread to all four corners of the earth from the region of the Promised Land. Jacob’s name was later changed to “Israel” (Genesis 32:28), and he had 12 sons who became the “12 tribes of Israel.”
The 12 tribes of Israel established

Before Jacob (Israel) died, he passed on the “birthright blessings” to his grandsons, who were named Ephraim and Manasseh. Israel gave prophetic blessings that were to be fulfilled in a time called “the last days” to all 12 of his sons (Genesis 49:1).

In Genesis 48:16, Israel blessed both Ephraim and Manasseh simultaneously with the words “let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.” Israel decreed that his own name, “Israel,” and the name of his own father, “Isaac,” would be placed upon the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph, who were to each become a distinct tribe among Israel’s sons (Genesis 48:5). In doing this, Israel was giving Joseph a “double portion” among the 12 tribes of Israel.

Israel foretold in Genesis 48:19 that while the descendants of Manasseh would become a “great” people (or nation), the descendants of Ephraim would become a “multitude of nations.” Since Joseph was expanded into two tribes, this meant that there would now be 13 tribes of Israel, although they were often still known as “the 12 tribes of Israel” because the priestly tribe, the Levites, did not receive a territorial inheritance in the Promised Land.

In the blessings recorded in Genesis 49, Israel gave prophecies for each of the tribes named after his 12 sons. The 12 sons of Israel are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulon, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin. The tribe most recognized by modern readers is Judah. Judah’s descendants have long been called “Jews.” However, Judah is just one of the sons of Israel. The vast majority of Israel’s descendants came from the other sons who were not called Jews.

The rise and fall of the 12 tribes of Israel

When the 12 tribes of Israel entered the Promised Land, they eventually formed the nation of Israel under David and Solomon. Soon after Solomon’s death, this empire was torn apart by a great civil war. The northern 10 tribes formed the kingdom of Israel, while the southern two tribes, Judah and Benjamin (joined by the priestly tribe of Levi), formed the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel was called “Israel” because it was led by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh who bore the name of “Israel” (Genesis 48:16). The southern kingdom was led by the tribe of Judah.

The kingdoms of Israel and Judah became enemies and often fought bloody wars. Though they have not reunited, they are prophesied to do so in the future. See “Israel and Judah: When Will They Be Reunited?”

The northern kingdom of Israel went into captivity in 722 B.C. because of sin and rebellion toward God. Judah was taken into captivity by the Babylonians between 604 and 586 B.C.

Just before the fall of Israel, the prophet Amos noted that the northern 10 tribes were known by the name “house of Isaac” (Amos 7:16)—just as the prophecies of Genesis 21:12 and 48:16 had predicted. The name of “Isaac” followed the 10 tribes wherever they went in their exile and later migrations.
In Jeremiah 51:5, we find a prophecy, given over a century after the 10 tribes went into captivity, that they would not be forsaken by God. Though sometimes called the “10 Lost Tribes of Israel,” these peoples are not lost to God or to students of the Bible who understand how to trace their history. To understand who some of these peoples are today, see “12 Tribes of Israel Today: Who Are They?” and “Who Are the United States and Britain in Prophecy?”

**Modern significance of the 12 tribes of Israel**

The 12 tribes of Israel eventually grew into great nations and empires just as God had predicted. Identifying these nations today helps us understand what will occur before Christ’s return.

Some people mistakenly think that, since the establishment of the New Testament Church, the identities of these people no longer serve any purpose. The truth is that God has many more plans for the peoples who have descended from the 12 tribes of Israel after Christ returns. For additional information, be sure to read the related articles on this site.

**12 Tribes of Israel Today: Who Are They?**

by David Treybig

**God made many promises to Abraham and his descendants, but many of his descendants disappeared from history. Where are the 12 tribes of Israel today?**

The famous Black Obelisk in the British Museum includes a pictorial etching of King Jehu of Israel paying tribute to King Shalmaneser of Assyria. After the Assyrian captivity, where are the 12 tribes of Israel today?
When God called Abraham, He promised him that because of his obedience, his descendants would become a great nation and that in him all nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). The physical blessings God gave Abraham would continue through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, also called Israel, whose 12 sons were the progenitors of the 12 tribes of Israel. There was also a spiritual promise that all nations would be blessed through Jesus Christ, who was a descendant of Abraham (Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-34).

Many have wondered where some of the peoples who came from Abraham went. Who are the 12 tribes of Israel today? Although the Bible does not specifically name the modern nations representing all of these people, there is biblical, historical and archaeological evidence that make it possible for us to positively identify the United States, Britain and many of the nations of Western Europe as the nations where descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel largely reside today. While this historical knowledge is not critical for salvation, it does help one understand end-time prophecy.

**Two kingdoms**

After they spent time as slaves in Egypt, God delivered Abraham’s descendants and allowed them to form the ancient nation of Israel. Over time, 10 of the tribes formed the northern kingdom of Israel and two of the tribes formed the southern kingdom of Judah. Due to their breaking of His laws, God allowed the northern kingdom to be taken captive by the Assyrians and, later, the southern kingdom to be taken by the Babylonians.

After 70 years, many of the captives of Judah returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the city. Because of this and their renewed diligence in keeping God’s Sabbath, their history continued. However, the northern 10 tribes largely disappeared from history. As a result, they are sometimes referred to as the lost 10 tribes of Israel. But while their nation disappeared, the descendants of these people continued to exist.

**Israel to be sifted among the nations**

In fact, God had promised that even though He would punish the people of ancient Israel for their sins, He would not completely destroy them. Instead, God said He would preserve them as He scattered them among the nations.

Speaking through the prophet Amos, God said: “‘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. ‘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).

God’s faithfulness in blessing the descendants of the ancient Israelites will continue after Christ’s return and the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on earth. As Jesus explained to His apostles: “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28). Even New Jerusalem will have 12 gates named after the 12 tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:12).

Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century, stated that “the entire body of the people of Israel remained in that country [Media]; wherefore there are but two tribes [Judah and
Benjamin] in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.5.2, *Complete Works of Flavius Josephus*, combined translations of William Whiston, 1867, and the Standard Edition, 1960).

The introduction to the book of James says, “To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,” which confirms that some in the early New Testament Church knew where at least some of the descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel were located.

**Following the clues**

To follow the history of the 12 tribes of Israel after the fall of their nation to the Assyrians in 721 B.C., we must recognize the path of their deportation and identify them by the names given them by their conquerors. Various websites and books have a great deal of information connecting the 12 tribes of Israel to the nations of Western Europe and the United States today, and it would be impossible to cover all this material in this answer. But here is some of the documentation.

When the Assyrians conquered Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, they transported many of the Israelites “to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes” (2 Kings 17:6). Shortly after the Israelites came into these lands, scholars note the appearance of peoples in this area called Cimmerians and Scythians. The Assyrians also called them Khumri, Ghomri, Gimiri (derivatives of King Omri of Israel) and Iskuza (derivative of Isaac).

The famous Black Obelisk in the British Museum includes a pictorial etching of King Jehu of Israel bowing and paying tribute to King Shalmaneser of Assyria. The text speaks of Jehu, son (really a successor) of Omri, giving the Assyrian king silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff and spears. This was the time during which Israel paid tribute to Assyria as a vassal nation prior to rebelling and being destroyed by Assyria.

Historian Tamara Rice writes: “The Scythians did not 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 [Mountains of southern Russia and Mongolia]. ... Assyrian documents place their appearance there 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” (*The Scythians*, 1961, pp. 19-20, 44).

Boris Piotrovsky in his book *From the Lands of the Scythians* notes, “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 and in Cappadocia for a hundred years, and record their advances into Asia Minor and Egypt.
“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” (1975, pp. 15, 18).

The Bible likewise indicates that the ancient Israelites would eventually migrate in a northwesterly direction away from Jerusalem. According to a prophecy yet to be fulfilled, God’s Servant will “restore the preserved ones of Israel” (Isaiah 49:6), and these peoples will come from “the north and the west” back to Jerusalem (verse 12).

While it is certainly clear that displaced Israelites were among these peoples, we should also note that not all Scythians or Cimmerians were Israelites. “Scythian” does not necessarily refer to a specific ethnic group. But it did include Israelites, who later moved in a northwesterly direction into Europe following their collapse as a nation.

**Historians link the Cimmerians with the Gauls or Celts of northwest Europe**

Historian Samuel Lysons linked some of the people who populated northwest Europe with these Cimmerians. As he put it, the Cimmerians seemed “to be the same people with the Gauls or Celts under a different name” (*Our British Ancestors: Who and What Were They?* 1865, p. 23).

English historian and scholar George Rawlinson wrote: “We have reasonable grounds for regarding the Gimirri, or Cimmerians, who first appeared on the confines of Assyria and Media in the seventh century B.C., and the Sacae of the Behistun Rock, nearly two centuries later, as identical with the Beth-Khumree of Samaria, or the Ten Tribes of the House of Israel” (noted in his translation of *History of Herodotus*, Book VII, p. 378).

Danish linguistic scholar Anne Kristensen concurs, stating: “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 Gimirrraja 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).

The Bible likewise indicates that the ancient Israelites would eventually migrate in a northwesterly direction away from Jerusalem. According to a prophecy yet to be fulfilled, God’s Servant will “restore the preserved ones of Israel” (Isaiah 49:6), and these peoples will come from “the north and the west” back to Jerusalem (verse 12).

**Archaeological evidence**

In addition to historical evidence, Scythian burial grounds have indicated a connection between these peoples and those of Nordic ancestry. For many years, scholars believed the Scythians were Mongols because groups of these nomadic people moved east, but the discovery of art and even a frozen corpse of a Scythian warrior indicate otherwise.
In July 2006 in the Altai Mountains of Mongolia near China and Russia, scientists made a rare find. German scientists who were part of the discovery team reported that the extremely well-preserved mummy of a Scythian warrior was that of “a 30-to-40 year-old man with blond hair” (“Ancient Mummy Found in Mongolia,” Spiegel Online International, Aug. 25, 2006). Blond hair, of course, is a characteristic of Europeans not Mongols.

Prior to the discovery of this mummy, art obtained from numerous Scythian burial grounds had likewise indicated that these peoples were related to Europeans rather than Mongols. Because Scythian chiefs were buried with all their collected wealth, including wives, horses and art, detailed images of Scythians, their clothes and weapons have been uncovered. These discoveries depict their men with long, flowing locks, facial hair and Caucasian features.

In conclusion, biblical, historical and archaeological evidence indicates that descendants of the so-called 10 lost tribes of ancient Israel migrated to northwestern Europe. It is more commonly understood that many peoples from these nations also settled in the United States. For the above noted reasons, we believe that the peoples who settled in northwestern Europe and the United States are largely the descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel today.
Tribe of Judah

by Jim Haeffele

The Bible speaks more about the tribe of Judah than any other single tribe of Israel. Why is this tribe given so much attention? What is Judah’s future?

A lion: the biblical symbol of the tribe of Judah.

The history of the tribe of Judah, which eventually became a nation, begins in the book of Genesis. Judah was the fourth son of the patriarch Jacob by his first wife, Leah (Genesis 29:35). He grew up with his brothers, working in the family business tending cattle and sheep.

In time Judah and his brothers developed hatred from jealousy and envy of their younger brother Joseph. Joseph was favored by his father, who gave him a special coat (Genesis 37:3). But it was when Joseph told his brothers about his dreams, which indicated he would be greater than them, that their hatred of him intensified (verses 5-11).

The hatred grew to the point that the brothers wanted to actually kill Joseph; but Reuben, the firstborn, stepped in to stop them. Joseph was placed in a pit; and while Reuben was absent, Judah came up with the idea of selling Joseph to Midianite traders for 20 shekels of silver (verses 18-22, 26-29). The brothers killed a goat and covered Joseph’s coat with blood to deceive their father into believing a wild animal had killed him. Jacob could never get over his grief for the loss of his son (Genesis 37:35).

Judah suffers with family problems

Judah and his brothers thought they had taken care of the problem of their younger brother, but God did not let that be the end of the story. Judah’s family would suffer many trials over
the next 20 years or more. Judah married a Canaanite woman named Shua. They had three
sons, Er, Onan and Shelah.

Judah took a wife, Tamar, for his firstborn son, Er, but he was so evil that God took his life
(Genesis 38:6-7). Judah commanded his second-born son, Onan, to marry Tamar and produce
an heir for his deceased brother as God’s laws commanded in such circumstances. Onan
would not carry through with this act because it would not be his heir. God then took Onan’s
life for his refusal to give his brother an heir (Genesis 38:8-10).

A strange event in Judah’s life

Following Onan’s death, Judah asked Tamar to not remarry, but to wait in her father’s house
until Judah’s youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry. Tamar complied with Judah’s
wishes. But quite a number of years went by, and Judah’s wife, Shua, died. Tamar realized
that she was not going to be given in marriage to Shelah, who was now grown (Genesis
38:11-14).

One day Tamar heard that her father-in-law was heading out to shear his sheep. She removed
her widow’s garments and dressed to appear as a harlot as she sat along the road where Judah
would pass by. Judah did not recognize her and propositioned her; and she demanded his
signet, cord and staff for collateral. When it was later discovered that she was pregnant, Judah
threatened her with death for harlotry. To save her life, she presented the items belonging to
Judah and said, “By the man to whom these belong, I am with child” (Genesis 38:18, 24-26).

Tamar had twins. At delivery, one twin put out his hand first and the midwife tied a scarlet
thread on it and said, “This one came out first.” But the other twin, Perez, came out
unexpectedly followed by Zerah with the scarlet thread tied on his hand (Genesis 38:27-30).

God would use the unusual birth of these twins to establish two lines of genealogy in the tribe
of Judah.

The second great promise God gave to Abraham stated, “And in you all the families of the
earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). This promise would come through the line of Perez.
King David and the kings of Judah would descend through the line of Perez. But most
importantly, Jesus Christ would come through this line so “all the families of the earth shall
be blessed” (Matthew 1:3, 16).

Why the tribe of Judah?

In looking at the life of Judah and his character, it is hard to see why the tribe of Judah should
become so prominent among the tribes of Israel. On the one hand, Joseph lived a righteous
life and was blessed with the birthright in place of Reuben, the firstborn. The name of “Israel”
was passed on to his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Yet God also chose Judah and his
descendants for a special place in His plan through the ages. The prophecy God gave to Jacob
at the end of his life concerning his sons’ descendants “in the latter days” reveals a special
blessing for the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:1, 8-10).

In speaking of the tribe of Judah, Jacob said, “Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall
praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s children shall bow down
before you. Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down,
he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people” (Genesis 49:8-10).

In this passage God looked at Judah as a strong warrior and likened him to a young lion sleeping in its den after devouring its prey. Perhaps it was this strength of character and determination that God foresaw in this tribe that influenced Him to choose Judah to be His lawgiver and the tribe from which His Son would later be born (Hebrews 7:14).

Regarding Genesis 49:10, Expositor’s Bible Commentary says, “The word ‘Shiloh,’ found in some English versions, is simply an untranslated form of the Hebrew expression meaning ‘one to whom it belongs.’” Jesus Christ is the “one to whom it belongs.”

David was apparently inspired by this passage in Genesis 49 to twice say in the Psalms that “Judah is My lawgiver” (Psalms 60:7; 108:8).

The tribe of Judah has not only been a lawgiver, but a preserver of God’s written laws. The apostle Paul said, “What advantage then has the Jew? … Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles [that which was spoken or commanded] of God” (Romans 3:1-2). Through the centuries, the Jews have faithfully preserved the books of the Old Testament and the Hebrew calendar.

**Judah prevails over his brothers**

The postexilic writer of 1 Chronicles, probably Ezra, wrote, “Yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph’s” (1 Chronicles 5:2).

How did Judah prevail?

During the time of Moses, the tribe of Judah became the stronger tribe and “prevailed over his brothers.” The census in Numbers 1 shows that Judah was the leading tribe in population and in men who could go to war (Numbers 1:2-3, 27).

After the death of Joshua, God chose the tribe of Judah to take the lead in conquering the nations who were living in the land promised to the 12 tribes (Judges 1:2). The first chapter of Judges shows that the tribe of Judah was aggressive and strong in driving out the Canaanites in the southern half of the land of Canaan.

An even more important way that Judah prevailed over his brothers took place during the time of King David. The tabernacle of God had long been in Shiloh in the territory of Joseph. But David set the stage for the temple to be built on Mount Zion, “which He [God] loved,” in the tribe of Judah (Psalm 78:67-70). God chose David to be His shepherd and Jerusalem (Mount Zion) for His place to dwell. God also chose David to hold the “scepter,” a symbol of kingship that would always remain in the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Psalm 89:34-37).

**National captivity**

After the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel became divided. Solomon’s son Rehoboam refused to lighten the burden of taxes that had been imposed by his father. In fact, Rehoboam threatened to make life far worse for the people than what his father had done. This resulted in
10 tribes separating and becoming the northern kingdom of Israel with its capital city in Samaria (1 Kings 12:12-14). The tribes of Judah, Benjamin and a part of Levi stayed with Rehoboam and became the southern kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The northern kingdom of Israel immediately went into idolatry and turned away from worshipping God. After 200 years, they went into national captivity at the hands of the Assyrian Empire.

The southern kingdom of Judah lasted more than a hundred years after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel. Judah also turned away from the God of their fathers and went after idols several times, and several times righteous kings instituted reforms. God sent prophets to warn them of their slide into idolatry, but eventually they would no longer listen. The Jewish nation was taken into national captivity by the Babylonians in several waves of deportations culminating in 586 B.C.

End-time nationhood

After 70 years of captivity in Babylon, some of the Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, but they didn’t fully return to the status of a sovereign nation until the 20th century. Jesus—the Messiah, the Savior of mankind—would come through the tribe of Judah, but He would be rejected by His own people. The Church Jesus established initially sprang out of the tribe of Judah. But since the middle of the first century, the Church of God has become largely non-Jewish in membership.

Approaching the 20th century, many Jewish groups and Christian churches were advocating a homeland in Palestine for the tribe of Judah. Jewish groups wanted to return to Judea because it was their ancient homeland. Christian groups saw the establishment of a Jewish state as a sign of end-time prophecy being fulfilled that would lead to the imminent return of Jesus Christ. One such prophecy can be found in Daniel 12:11, which indicates that the Jews will resume animal sacrifices before the return of Christ. Presumably, they would need their own homeland to do this.

In 1917 the Balfour Declaration made public Great Britain’s support of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. But it would not become a reality until May 14, 1948. Today, the nation called Israel is a major power in the Middle East, but will it remain such a power until the second coming of Jesus Christ?

Tribulation and restoration

Jesus in His Olivet Prophecy said, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). The tribe of Judah and the State of Israel will not be spared from this traumatic time. In Luke’s account of the same prophecy, Jesus said, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:20).

The prophet Zechariah also spoke of this same time, “For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city” (Zechariah 14:2). Invasion and war will come to Jerusalem and to the tribe of Judah.
Following the prophecy of the invasion of Israel and Jerusalem, Zechariah announced the good news of the coming of Christ: “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. … And the LORD shall be King over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:4, 9).

Jeremiah spoke of this same time when he said, “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 23:6).

The good news for the tribe of Judah and this world is that the “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:5), will return to establish the Kingdom of God, and the tribe of Judah will finally accept its Redeemer (Romans 11:26).

Read more about this wonderful promised future in the section on the “Kingdom of God.” You can also find related articles in this section about the “12 Tribes of Israel” and the section about the “Middle East in Bible Prophecy.”

All Israel Will Be Saved!

by David Treybig

The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, “All Israel will be saved.” But when so many don’t believe in Jesus Christ, how could Paul say that?
In reference to his fellow Israelites (Romans 9:3-4; 11:1), Paul said, “And so all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26). Since the vast majority of Jews have not believed in and do not believe in Jesus, some wonder how Paul could declare that all Israel will be saved.

The Bible tells us that God exalted Jesus “to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31) and that salvation can only come through Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Acts 4:10, 12). As such, recognizing Christ as the Son of God is central to receiving eternal life. So how can it be that all Israel—including the tribe of Judah, from which came the Jews—will be saved since many haven’t believed in Jesus? A careful examination of Romans 9-11 provides the answer.

Paul begins by acknowledging that, among some of his countrymen, “the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham” (Romans 9:6-7). In other words, God’s promises are not limited to the physical descendants of Abraham. The people of the New Testament Church are referred to as “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16) because of their faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ—not because of their family lineage.

As for those who did not believe, Paul further noted: “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3). Warning against this path, Paul pleaded with his countrymen, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (verse 9).

Future redemption

Even though Paul’s warnings did not influence all to repent and believe in Jesus at that time, Paul knew that in the long run—in the future—Jesus would come again to earth and those who had not previously had a full opportunity to recognize Christ and receive salvation would then have the opportunity to do so.

As Paul said, “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins’” (Romans 11:26-27).

God’s festivals reveal His plan of salvation for mankind, and through the meaning of one of these festivals—the Feast of Tabernacles—we understand that Christ will return to earth and reign for 1,000 years. During this millennial reign of Christ, Satan will be bound so there will no longer be the religious deception and confusion that exists today, and people of all nationalities will have their opportunity to hear God’s truth, repent of their sins and receive salvation (Revelation 20:1-4).

After the thousand years

Speaking of still another time of education and judgment, Revelation 20:5 says, “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.” In vision, the prophet Ezekiel foresaw this time when the dry bones of deceased Israelites (representing those who had died not understanding God’s plan) would be brought back to life and given access to God’s Spirit so they will be able to understand and choose whether to obey God (Ezekiel
37:1-14). Jesus also talked about the gentiles being raised in this resurrection (Matthew 11:22,
24; 12:41-42),

Because of Satan’s deception and the “veil” that prevents people from understanding God’s
truth until the Father calls them (Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 3:13-16; John 6:44), this will
not be a second chance for these people. This will be their first opportunity to truly understand
God’s marvelous offer to become a member of His family and live forever (John 1:12;
Matthew 19:29; 25:46).

So how was Paul able to confidently proclaim that all Israel will be saved? He understood that
God’s desire is that “all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9) and that God, through His
plan of salvation, will give everyone a full and fair opportunity to understand His truth, repent
of his or her sins and receive salvation. Although some may choose not to obey God and
receive these blessings, Paul believed that the overwhelming majority of Israelites would be
saved.

Why Did God Choose Israel?

by David Treybig

The Bible has a lot about the people of Israel being God’s
chosen people. But He loves and has a plan for all people,
so why did God choose Israel?

The Scriptures are quite clear that among all the nations in the world, God chose Israel as the
one He would work with. This was the nation that God delivered out of slavery in Egypt, the
nation to whom God gave the land of Canaan, and the nation through whom would come Jesus, the Messiah. Was there something special about these people unlike others?

God Himself answered this very question. In addressing the ancient Israelites, He told them: “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. 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, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:6-8, emphasis added).

So why did God choose Israel? God chose the ancient Israelites because He had promised Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation and occupy the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:3, 7; 17:4, 7-8; 22:17). God blessed Abraham and his descendants because of Abraham’s faith, a living faith that resulted in diligent obedience to God’s instructions and law (Genesis 26:3-5). This promise was repeated to Abraham’s son, Isaac, and to Abraham’s grandson, Jacob (Genesis 17:21; 26:24; 28:1-4, 13).

God’s purpose in choosing Israel was for them to be a model nation to other nations and that through them “all the families of the earth” would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). He wanted Israel to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). Other nations would see that when the Israelites obeyed God, they were blessed (verse 5), and when they disobeyed God, they would be punished (Deuteronomy 28).

Non-Israelites welcomed in the Old Testament

While God chose to work with the ancient nation Israel, this decision did not exclude people from other nations (gentiles) from coming to understand God and serve Him. God instructed the ancient Israelites that they were to respect peoples of other nationalities who came to live with them.

As for observing the Passover (one of God’s commanded observances in both the Old and New Testaments), God said, “And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it” (Exodus 12:48). Showing fairness for all, God continued, “One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you” (verse 49). Later, God added: “You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:21).

A good example of God’s acceptance of non-Israelites in the Old Testament is found in the life of Ruth. Though a Moabite by birth (Ruth 1:1-4), she came to respect and follow God. As Ruth told Naomi, her Israelite mother-in-law, after the premature death of her husband: “Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God” (verse 16). Ruth then married an Israelite man named Boaz and became part of the family lineage God selected for Jesus (Matthew 1:1-16).

Gentiles welcomed into the Church
When the Holy Spirit was granted to Jesus’ followers and the New Testament Church was established on the Day of Pentecost, the people in this beginning congregation were initially Jews (Acts 2:5), one of the 12 tribes that comprised ancient Israel. Because God had specifically chosen and worked with their ancestors and now was continuing to do so, they understood themselves as being part of “the commonwealth of Israel,” which gave them access to God’s “covenants of promise” (Ephesians 2:12).

These Jews who were the earliest Christians did not fully understand that God was also going to bring gentiles into the Church. Through a miraculous granting of the Holy Spirit to a gentile named Cornelius and his household, just as God had previously done for Jews on the Day of Pentecost, Peter and the members of the New Testament Church came to understand that God was now also calling gentiles.

Israel’s future

The ancient Israelites went into captivity for their sins and lost their national prominence, leading many to wonder, Why did God choose Israel? Still, there remains a bright future for these peoples. When Christ returns to this earth and sets up the Kingdom of God, He will restore Israel to its position of leadership in the world (Isaiah 11:12; 14:1-2). A humbled, obedient people will then fulfill the leadership role God intended for them.
Israel and Judah: When Will They Be Reunited?

by David Treybig

The division of Israel and Judah plays a big role in Bible history and prophecy, though this is confusing to many today. When will they be reunited?

After the death of King Solomon of Israel, the 12 tribes of Israel divided into two kingdoms. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, became king of the southern kingdom of Judah, which was comprised of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and much of the tribe of Levi, the tribe that served at the temple. Jeroboam, a former servant of King Solomon, became king of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was comprised of the remaining 10 tribes (1 Kings 11 and 12). Even though all the tribes were descendants of Jacob (also called Israel, Genesis 32:28; 35:10) and were known as Israelites under the single nation with this name, these peoples were now separated into two nations.

The Bible reveals that Israel and Judah will eventually be reunited as one nation. Before we look at this prophecy, consider a brief history of what happened to these two groups of people.

What happened to Israel and Judah?

It is important to note the distinction between the peoples of these two nations: Israel and Judah. While all Jews were Israelites because they were descendants of Jacob (Israel), not all Israelites were Jews. Some Israelites came from tribes other than Judah and Benjamin.
Reflecting this distinction, the first time the word *Jew* appears in the *King James Version* of the Bible, the nations of Israel and Syria are at war with the “Jews” (2 Kings 16:5-6).

Because of disobedience to His laws, God allowed the northern kingdom of Israel to be taken into captivity by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C. The Assyrians took these Israelites captive in successive deportations and settled them “in the cities of the Medes” (2 Kings 15:29; 18:9-12). Since this time, these people are known in history as the *lost 10 tribes of Israel*.

Less than 150 years later, during the sixth century B.C., God allowed the nation of Judah, which likewise continued to sin, to fall to the Babylonian Empire. Many Jews, including the *prophet Daniel* and his three friends, were taken as captives to Babylon. After 70 years, the Jews were given their freedom and allowed to return to Judah and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple. They were still in their land when the Romans conquered Judea in 63 B.C.

**Israel and Judah in the first century**

Although there had been some mixing of the peoples of Israel and Judah (2 Kings 18:9-13; 2 Chronicles 34:9) during their respective captivities, during the first century it was still understood that these remained distinct groups of people. Since he was of the tribe of Benjamin, Paul told people that he was both a Jew (Acts 21:39) and an Israelite (Philippians 3:5).

When James wrote his general epistle, he addressed it to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). Writing during this same time period, the Jewish historian *Josephus* said, “The entire body of the people of Israel remained in that country [Media]; wherefore there are but two tribes [Judah and Benjamin] in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.5.2, *Complete Works of Flavius Josephus*, combined translations of William Whiston, 1867, and the Standard Edition, 1960).

**The modern nation of Israel**

When the modern nation of Israel was founded in 1948, it was established as a haven for Jews. Some have mistakenly assumed that because its founders chose the name *Israel*, this nation is now home for all of the descendants of ancient Israel. Several passages in the Bible make it clear that the modern nation of Israel does not represent all of the ancient Israelites.

First, we must realize that the Bible speaks of Abraham’s descendants as being an extremely large number of people—“as the sand of the sea” (Genesis 32:12). With the modern nation of Israel’s population approaching 8 million, compared to the earth’s current population of approximately 7 billion, the belief that the modern nation of Israel represents all of Abraham’s descendants doesn’t adequately respect or do justice to the promise God made to this patriarch.

Furthermore, Abraham’s descendant Ephraim was prophesied to “become a multitude of nations”; and his brother, Manasseh, a “great” nation (Genesis 48:19). Again, the modern nation of Israel has not fulfilled these biblical prophecies.
Israel and Judah reunited

While delivering prophecies to the ancient peoples of Israel and Judah of the upcoming demise of their nations because of their disobedience to God’s law, several prophets also spoke of a time of restoration after Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Jeremiah wrote: “‘In those days and in that time,’ says the LORD, ‘the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together; with continual weeping they shall come, and seek the LORD their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it, saying, “Come and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten’”’ (Jeremiah 50:4-5). This prophecy speaks of both Israel and Judah jointly coming to God.

More explicitly via the use of a visual aid, God revealed through Ezekiel His plan to unite the two nations. “‘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.

“‘And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, “Will you not show us what you mean by these?”—say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My 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, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again’”’” (Ezekiel 37:16-19, 21-22).

The descendants of the ancient Israelites who had been part of the ancient nations of Israel and Judah will be reunited. They will once again be one nation.
God’s Promise to Abraham

by David Treybig

In Genesis 12:2-3, God made a promise to Abraham that continued far beyond this patriarch’s lifetime. What was this promise? Does it still apply today?

When God began working with Abram (his name was later changed to Abraham), God gave him a command and an amazing promise. The command was “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1).

Explaining the promise He would give Abraham in exchange for his obedience, God continued: “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” (verses 2-3).

This promise had multiple components, including the promise of multiple descendants, fame, divine protection and that Abraham through his descendants would be a blessing to all people. Abraham’s son, Isaac, and grandson, Jacob, were “heirs with him of the same promise” (Hebrews 11:9, emphasis added throughout).

Because of the multiple components that were part of this promise, it is also acceptable to refer to these components as promises. Indeed, this is how many translations of the Bible, including the New King James Version, translate Paul’s statement to the Galatians: “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made” (Galatians 3:16).

Our article “Promises to Abraham” explains that these promises were both physical and spiritual in nature. Physically, Abraham’s descendants would become a great nation. The
spiritual blessing to all people was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, a descendant of Abraham, through whom people of all nationalities may receive salvation (Acts 4:10-12; Galatians 3:16).

In this article, we will examine some of the components of the promises that were made to Abraham. As we will see, there are several additional passages in the book of Genesis that further explain what God was offering to Abraham and his descendants. In addition to Genesis 12:2-3, which we’ve already noted, here are a few more passages in this first book of the Bible that further expound upon the great blessing God was offering Abraham.

**Genesis 12:7**

“Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.”

When Abraham left his country for the land God promised to show him, “he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8). After Abraham arrived in the land God wanted him to see, God announced that He would give this land to his descendants. As Abraham obeyed and grew in faith, God continued to reveal to him the blessings he and his descendants would receive.

**Genesis 13:2, 14-17**

“Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. …

“And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: ‘Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.’”

God had promised to bless Abraham, and this soon became apparent due to Abraham’s personal wealth. Adding to what He had previously spoken, God now told this patriarch that his descendants would be numerous and that He was giving this land to Abraham and his descendants forever. God then encouraged Abraham to walk through the land—to check out the gift that he was being given.

**Genesis 15:4-6, 18**

“And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.’ Then He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. … On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.’”
In response to Abraham’s statement that he was childless and that a servant was his heir, God told Abraham that his own child would be his heir and that through this child and subsequent generations, his descendants would become numerous, like the stars in the sky.

A significant detail here is that Abraham believed that what God had promised would indeed come about. Again, God repeats His promise of land for Abraham’s descendants—this time formalizing this part of the promise with a covenant that included specific geographical boundaries.

**Genesis 17:1-8, 15-16**

“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.’ Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ‘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 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.’ …

“Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.’”

Many years had now gone by since God had first promised Abraham that his descendants would become so numerous that they could be compared to the dust of the earth and the stars of the sky. But so far, Abraham and his wife had not had any children. They were both getting older, and it was looking like they would not have any children. God took this occasion to remind Abraham that He would multiply him “exceedingly.”

At this time God also changed Abram’s name to Abraham, saying he would become a “father of many nations,” and the name of his wife from Sarai to Sarah, saying she would be a “mother of nations” (Genesis 17:5, 16). Even though it didn’t look like Abraham and Sarah would ever have a child, God continued to repeat and add details to the original promise He had made to Abraham.

**Genesis 18:17-18**

“And the LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?’”

The setting for this passage is just prior to God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah due to the wickedness of these cities’ inhabitants. Here, in a remarkable verse, we see God’s
thoughts on whether to share with Abraham what He is about to do. What apparently led God to share His plan with Abraham was the fact that Abraham would become a mighty nation and that all nations would be blessed through this man.

What this verse tells us is that this promise to Abraham was extremely important to God. God frequently brought up this promise in discussions with the patriarch; and here, it was apparently an important factor in God deciding to share with Abraham what He was planning to do to these cities.

**Genesis 21:1-3**

“And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac.”

This passage shows that God was true to His word. Even though Sarah was “past the age” for having children, God miraculously allowed her to conceive and bear a son (Hebrews 11:11). “Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore” (verse 12).

**Genesis 22:16-18**

“By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

After Abraham showed that he was willing to sacrifice his only son—the one through whom Abraham expected God to fulfill His promise of many descendants, God repeated again the great blessing He said that He would give to Abraham. In addition to his descendants having numerous progeny, God told Abraham, “Your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.”

While various interpretations of this phrase “gate of their enemies” range from having power and authority over others (legal transactions took place at the gate of a city) to controlling strategic land and sea gates, both of these concepts may have been intended. Seeing the many times God repeats the blessing, both are logical in light of God’s statement to Abraham: “I will make you a great nation” (Genesis 12:2). Great nations wield authority and control strategic land and sea gates.

**Does the promise still apply?**

Today it is commonly understood that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of God’s promise to bless all families of the earth through Abraham. It is also acknowledged that Abraham’s descendants multiplied and eventually became the ancient nations of Israel and Judah. But does God’s promise to Abraham have any significance today?
While many people readily acknowledge that the blessing of Jesus Christ to all peoples continues today, they don’t know whether the physical promises to Abraham’s descendants are still applicable. Some think that the blessings were fulfilled and, hence, there is no continuance of the physical promises.

What the Bible teaches is that the physical blessings to these people will continue until and after Christ’s return. For example, Genesis 49:1 presupposes that the 12 sons of Jacob would grow into prominent nations and that they would exist “in the last days.”

During His New Testament ministry, Jesus told His disciples that in the future Kingdom of God, they would sit on thrones “judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). New Jerusalem will have 12 gates, each named after one of “the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” (Revelation 21:12).

The answer is that both the spiritual and physical components of Abraham’s promise still apply. The opportunity to receive salvation comes through the spiritual part of God’s promise to Abraham—the coming of Jesus Christ. Making sense of end-time prophecies is enhanced by understanding who the nations are today that are largely comprised of Abraham’s descendants. Be sure to read the articles in this section that provide keys to these nations’ identities.
Replacement Theology: Has the Church Replaced Israel?

by David Treybig

Replacement Theology claims that all the promises given to Abraham have been transferred to the Church in the New Testament. Is this true?

God is calling peoples of all nationalities into His Church.

Some people acknowledge that God made many promises to Abraham and believe that all of these promises have been fulfilled. God did indeed bless Abraham, and all nations have been blessed through Christ (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:16).

Recognizing that God is now working through His Church, many believe that the Church has replaced Israel. Commonly referred to as Replacement Theology, this way of thinking perceives the prophecies of the Bible directed toward Israel as now being for the Church. As such, some believe that understanding who the physical descendants of the ancient Israelites are no longer has any relevance.

So has the Church of God replaced Israel? The answer is both “Yes” and “No.”

Yes, God is now calling people from all nationalities into His Church

When the New Testament Church began on the Day of Pentecost, those present were primarily Jews and proselytes—people who wished to become Jewish in their worship of God (Acts 2:5-10).
In time, God dramatically demonstrated to Peter and the New Testament Church that He was also calling gentiles—people who were not of Israelite heritage—into His Church (Acts 10 and 11). God revealed to the Church that male circumcision, which was a sign of Israel’s Old Covenant relationship with God, was not required for gentile converts (Acts 15). Circumcision under the New Covenant was of the heart—meaning a repentant spirit.

Explaining this change, Paul wrote: “For he is not a [spiritual] Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:28-29).

The ethnic barriers that had separated Jews and gentiles were now torn down within the Church. Continuing this topic, Paul explained: “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” (Galatians 3:28). Because gentiles and Jews had now become one, Paul called this body of believers “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

No, Bible prophecies still refer to the physical descendants of Abraham

While God’s Church is now open to people of all nationalities, the physical blessings God promised Abraham’s descendants continue. The Bible does not teach Replacement Theology.

Prior to his death, Jacob—also called “Israel,” the father of the 12 sons from whom would arise the 12 tribes of Israel—called his sons together and told them what would happen to their descendants “in the last days” (Genesis 49:1-2).

Speaking of the special blessings that would come upon Joseph and Joseph’s two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob said, “By the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers” (verses 25-26).

Based upon historical and archaeological evidence, the people of Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are primarily the descendants of Ephraim, and the people of the United States are primarily the descendants of Manasseh. (See our articles “12 Tribes of Israel Today” and “Who Are the United States and Britain in Prophecy?”)

In addition to the blessings prophesied to come to these peoples, the Bible also warns that just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, the descendants of these peoples will be punished for their disobedience to God’s laws and then restored (Jeremiah 30:3, 7-11, 15-17).

The biblical explanation

Rather than supporting Replacement Theology and saying that the New Testament Church replaced Israel, the Bible speaks of gentiles being “grafted in” to Israel. Speaking to gentiles, Paul wrote: “And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not
support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear” (Romans 11:17-20).

As we noted earlier, a gentile—a non-Jew—who becomes part of the Church is now considered a “Jew” (Romans 2:28-29). Speaking of both Jews and gentiles who comprised the New Testament Church, Paul said that Abraham was “the father of us all” (Romans 4:16) and “those who are of faith are sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7).

Jesus spoke of this Himself in Matthew 21:42-44, where He told the Pharisees that “the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” Jesus said that the Kingdom was to be open to gentiles as well as Jews—to all those who responded to the message of the Kingdom.

In summary, God is calling peoples of all nationalities into His Church. When we become part of this Body of believers, the Bible describes us as being the “sons of Abraham.” Even so, the Bible does not teach Replacement Theology. God remains faithful and the promises He made to Abraham and this patriarch’s physical descendants continue.
Many small nations are mentioned in Bible prophecy. Wouldn’t God also address a major world power like the United States of America in prophecy?

Bible prophecy covers the vast sweep of human history, but it focuses heavily on the time of the end, the time just before Jesus Christ returns to this earth. Many biblical signs show that we are approaching that time now.

Since the Bible clearly addresses prophecies to the peoples of smaller nations, like Jordan, Israel and Egypt, many have wondered whether God also addresses a superpower like the United States. If He does, how can we identify America in prophecy? What names does the Bible use and what does God foretell for the United States of America?

The answers to these questions require a careful study of Bible prophecy and of history. The articles in this section provide intriguing evidence that helps us understand where the people of the United States (and their brothers in Britain, Canada and Australia) came from, how they received such blessings and power in the world, and what God has to say to them today.
Discovering America in prophecy is certainly interesting information, but it is not simply historical trivia. This knowledge is needed in order to understand many of God’s promises and His prophecies. God’s prophecies for America will come to pass—and you need to be aware of them so you can be prepared.

**Blessings of Abraham: How They Came to the United States**

by Tim Groves

**How did the United States become such a prominent nation? What made America great? How can we trace her roots?**

The United States has been the most materially blessed single nation in history. Though few have recognized it, America’s rise to superpower status started with one man’s faithfulness to God.

Some 4,000 years ago God called a man named Abram (whose name God later changed to Abraham). God told Abram to leave his present country and go where He would lead him. God promised Abram that if he obeyed, He would cause many nations and kings to come from his lineage (Genesis 17:1-6).
Abraham continued to be faithful to God, and when Abraham passed the supreme test of being willing to sacrifice his son, God made an unconditional promise that his descendants would be innumerable and have world dominance (Genesis 22:16-18). The blessings of Abraham were then passed down to his descendants.

**Promise of national greatness passed down**

This birthright promise was passed down to Abraham’s son Isaac, then to Isaac’s son Jacob, and then to Jacob’s son Joseph.

Joseph had two sons while he was in Egypt, Ephraim and Manasseh. Just before Jacob died, he adopted these two grandchildren and, being guided by God, made them inheritors of his birthright promise (Genesis 48:13-16).

Jacob was also inspired by God to give a prophecy about his two grandchildren. He said that Ephraim would become a multitude of nations and Manasseh would be a great single nation (Genesis 48:19). Jacob foretold that in the last days the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh would spread (Genesis 49:1, 22). They would prevail in wars because God would be with them (verses 23-24). And they would also inherit great natural resources (verses 25-26)—all part of the blessings of Abraham.

**Ancient Israel failed to receive the full birthright promise**

God wanted to give ancient Israel national greatness. When He made the covenant with the 12 tribes of Israel in the wilderness, He told them they would become great if they obeyed Him.

We know that Israel did not obey God; and eventually 10 of the tribes, including Ephraim and Manasseh, went into captivity to Assyria in 721-718 B.C. From this point forward, they were scattered and seemed to disappear from the historical records.

What became of God’s promises to give the blessings of Abraham to his descendants? Many Christians understand that the promise of salvation through Abraham’s Seed was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). But what of the physical birthright promises? If we believe that God fulfills *all* His promises, we will look for a company of nations and a powerful single nation who have been blessed by God.

**Where did the Israelites go?**

Even though Israel was scattered, God said He would keep and preserve them (Amos 9:9). The Bible tells us in several passages, including Isaiah 49:12, that the Israelites migrated toward the northwest and to the “isles afar off” (Jeremiah 31:10). The British Isles are northwest of their previous homeland and the location of their captivity in Assyria.

Is it just a coincidence that the word British resembles two Hebrew words “*beriyth-iysh,*” which mean “covenant man”? The Bible repeatedly refers to the covenant (agreement) God made with Israel (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 4:13).

God’s people would also be known by Isaac’s name. Americans and Britons are known as Anglo-Saxons. “Saxons” is simply a derivation of “Isaac’s sons.”
The United States and Britain become world powers

Before 1800, both America and Britain were regional powers. But shortly after 1800, both suddenly received many blessings. First Britain then the United States became world-leading superpowers.

In 1803 the United States acquired the Louisiana Purchase, which nearly doubled the size of the country. Britain’s empire suddenly spread around the globe, and the sun never set on her company of nations. At their peak, the United States and Britain came into possession of more than two-thirds of the world’s resources and wealth. God fulfilled the biblical promises to provide the blessings of Abraham to his physical descendants.

So what does it all mean?

There are many more biblical and historical clues that the United States and Britain (and the British “multitude of nations” including Australia, Canada and New Zealand) are indeed the descendants of ancient Israel. For more information about the United States’ roots in ancient Israel, read the related articles in “America in Prophecy.” To learn more about the promises to Abraham, read the articles “Promises to Abraham” and “God’s Promise to Abraham.”
Who Are the United States and Britain in Prophecy?

by David Treybig

The United States and Britain have held the most power during the past two centuries, and so many have wondered who these people are in Bible prophecy.

To see the connection between the ancient Israelites and the peoples of northwest Europe, from which came the settlers who founded the United States, see our article “12 Tribes of Israel Today: Who Are They?” That article cites biblical and historical records that make it possible for us to positively identify many of the people of Western Europe as the descendants of the ancient Israelites. Now we’ll more specifically consider the United States and Britain in prophecy.

Jacob’s blessing of Manasseh and Ephraim

Prior to Jacob’s death, his son Joseph brought his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim to Jacob so he could bless them (Genesis 48:1-6). In an unusual but perceptive move, Jacob placed his right hand on the younger boy, Ephraim, and his left hand on the older boy, Manasseh (verse 14). Normally, his right hand, representing a greater blessing, would have gone on the older child.

In blessing them and in explaining to Joseph that he knew what he was doing, Jacob said, “I know, my son, I know. He [Manasseh] also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.’ So he blessed them that day, saying, ‘By you Israel will bless, saying,
“May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!” And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh” (verses 19-20).

Looking at modern history, we note that Britain became a great commonwealth of nations with an empire that stretched around the globe, while the United States became a great individual nation.

**Joseph is a “fruitful bough”**

An additional explanation by Jacob of what would happen “in the last days” to the various peoples and nations each of his sons represented is also revealing (Genesis 49:1). Speaking of Joseph, Jacob said, “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him.

“But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), by the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers” (verses 22-26).

**Fulfilled promises to the United States and Britain in prophecy**

Joseph, representing his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim, was destined to receive the greatest blessing among all the brothers. As for sheer size of territory controlled, the British Commonwealth has clearly been the group of nations best matching the prophecies related to Ephraim.

Describing the British Empire, [listverse.com](http://listverse.com) states: “At [its] greatest extent, the British empire was known as the largest empire in history, as it covered more than 13,000,000 square miles, which is approximately a quarter of the Earth’s total land area, and controlled more than 500 million people—again a quarter of the world’s population. As a result, the legacy it imprinted on these conquered lands is tremendous in terms of political reform, cultural exchanges and way of life. The English language, which it spread, is the second most-widely spoken language in the world today, and many [linguists] agree that English is the defacto standard language of the world. The British empire is definitely one of the most influential empires ever to have existed in human history.”

As for Manasseh, the United States best fits the biblical description of being a “great” nation (Genesis 48:19) due to its economy and military strength (“his bow remained in strength,” Genesis 49:24). The United States “represents 4.5% of global population but nearly 30% of its total GDP” (policymic.com). As a result, its citizens enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. Regarding military spending, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute documents that in 2010 the United States spent roughly six times more on its military than the next closest nation, China.

While much additional documentation could be accumulated, these brief yet significant points identify Britain as Ephraim and the United States as Manasseh. It is important to recognize that God had not only promises but warnings for the United States and Britain in prophecy.
To learn more about God’s promises to Abraham, be sure to read the articles in this section on the “America in Prophecy.”

Why Is God Angry With America?

by Mike Bennett

Much of prophecy focuses on God’s anger with people’s sins. Those He has blessed receive a stricter judgment. What has America done to deserve God’s anger?

Debris following the Joplin, Missouri, F5 tornado in 2011.

Please note that we love the United States. We pray for her and wish her only the best. When we think of her sins, we are deeply saddened.

So why are we writing about America’s sins and the curses prophesied to befall her? First, because we do love her and hope against hope that America, or at least many of her people, will repent and be spared.

Please also note that many of these same things could be said about other countries like Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand, as well as many non-English-speaking countries.

Why is God angry?

God is love. He created human beings for an incredible purpose—to welcome us into His family as His children! He loves all human beings greatly, including Americans.
But He also says He is angry (Psalm 7:11; Isaiah 1:3-4; Revelation 6:17; and many other places). Why?

Strange as it may seem to us humans, even God’s anger is an expression of His love. His correction is designed to help us overcome the things that are detrimental to our eternal relationship with Him.

God’s way of living produces love, joy and peace. He revealed that beneficial way of living through His laws, which were given for our good (Deuteronomy 10:13). He explained that obeying these beneficial laws would produce tremendous blessings (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). But ignoring and breaking these laws would cause automatic penalties and curses (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

God knows what works and what doesn’t; and if He, like a loving parent, tells us not to run into the busy street, He has good reasons for it.

What are those good and beneficial laws? Let’s start with what Jesus Christ called the “great commandment”: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37-38).

God first loved us, and He is love and wants us to be like Him. So this commandment is designed to set us on that right path. Loving our Creator God wholeheartedly is not only reasonable, it is beneficial to us. It helps us prepare to live in joyous, productive harmony with God forever!

To love God the way He wants to be loved, we need to study what He has told us about how to worship Him. We might have our own ideas, but isn’t it logical to just see what He wants? This great commandment is actually expanded in the first four of the 10 Commandments. These commandments are eternal, living laws with automatic benefits and penalties, as sure as the law of gravity.

So let’s look at these commandments and consider how America is doing with them. We’ll see why God is grieved to see Americans (and others) break them and why He is angry with us.

**First Commandment: Who do we worship?**

God commands us in the **First Commandment**: “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3).


Consider the apostle Paul’s warning about the destructive attitudes that will pervade the end-time age—the attitudes that will bring humanity to the brink of self-destruction: “For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy … lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:2, 4-5).

Doesn’t this describe the attitudes of many Americans today? (In fact, the whole list sounds like a description of the entire Western world.)
Yes, Americans still claim to be religious, but too often that is in name only. Religion has little impact on their choices and actions. When they look for religious teachers, too often they are drawn to those who will tell them whatever they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). They look for preachers with smooth and easy messages, not those who proclaim with power the difficult, narrow path taught by the Bible—the life that demands wholehearted devotion to the true God (Matthew 7:14).

**Second Commandment: America’s idols**

In the [Second Commandment](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?v=Ez%3A20%3A2-19) God commands us not to make idols. But how many Americans have made idols of money, fame, a fancy car or a sexy star?

And many established religions use icons, statues and objects in their worship, ignoring this command. Besides that, a growing number of Americans seeking spiritual experiences are dabbling with or going wholeheartedly into neo-paganism. Some of the smaller but fastest-growing religious identifications in America include Wiccan, pagan and spiritualist.

And if you go shopping or watch TV during the Christmas season, you might think a fat man in a red suit is America’s chief idol! Santa Claus has come to represent the height of American consumerism during the frenzied Christmas shopping season. The apostle Paul even equated covetousness—the desire for more things—with idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

**Third Commandment: Taking God’s Name in Vain**

God commands in the [Third Commandment](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?v=Ex%3A20%3A7): “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain” (Exodus 20:7). Yet every day in America God’s name is lightly treated as an interjection, a filler word or a vile curse. This occurs regularly in the media and in colleges and schools and is occurring more often in the workplace and even the home around small children. Surprisingly, even 16 percent of those who called themselves evangelical Christians admit to using profanity in the previous week in a [Barna survey](https://www.barna.org). Besides this blatant misuse and demeaning of God’s holy name, consider that most Americans call themselves Christian, yet many do things that bring shame to Christ’s name. For example, the same Barna survey showed that 12 percent of evangelical Christians admitted to intentionally viewing pornography in the previous week. A [previous Barna study](https://www.barna.org) showed that people calling themselves Christians were just as likely to divorce as non-Christians.

**Fourth Commandment: Remembering what?**

How many Americans “remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8; [Fourth Commandment](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?v=Ex%3A20%3A8))? How many even know they should?

This is a major failing of religious leaders who have blindly or knowingly followed the changes made by men long after the Bible was completed. When Jesus Christ, the apostles and the New Testament Church clearly worshipped God on the seventh-day Sabbath, why have so few Christians followed their example? Why have so many ignored the fact that God is furious at those who have “profaned My Sabbaths” (Ezekiel 20:21)?

When God’s clear commands are replaced by the traditions of men, God is not pleased. When time He set aside as precious and holy is trampled on and profaned, He is angered.
Perhaps an analogy would help. If your family had a burial site that you considered sacred ground that you carefully tended and cared for, how would you feel if a neighbor moved the gravestones and put a pigsty there? Wouldn’t you be angry?

So God is angry when His sacred day of worship is trampled on and replaced with a day He did not sanction.

As we saw earlier, these first four commandments expand on the great commandment to love God. Jesus also said the second great commandment is, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). This summary can be expanded by looking at the last six of the 10 Commandments, which show us how to truly love other people in the way God knows is best.

How does the United States measure up on keeping these commandments? How do we individually measure up?

**Fifth Commandment: Honoring parents**

God’s Fifth Commandment tells us: “Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12).

God promises blessings even within the text of this command. Proper respect for parents leads to proper respect for authority, which is necessary for a peaceful life, family and society.

But God has harsh words for those who curse their parents and mock them instead of thanking them (Proverbs 30:11-12, 17). Disrespect ranges from tantrums to eye rolling, from ignoring to physical violence.

Adolescents are violent to their parents in 7 to 18 percent of two-parent families according to estimates, and in 29 percent of one-parent families.

And it’s not just young people who are disrespecting their parents. Elder abuse has become a terrible blotch on society, with “between 1 and 2 million Americans age 65 or older … injured, exploited, or otherwise mistreated by someone on whom they depended for care or protection” according to the National Center on Elder Abuse.

**Sixth Commandment: Murder**

In the Sixth Commandment God commands: “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13).

Yet in 2010, 14,748 people were murdered in the United States. And, as if it weren’t enough to hear about all those real murders on the news, Americans are fascinated with murder as entertainment. So I estimate that the average American child will see 8,000 murders on television by the time he or she finishes elementary school and 40,000 by age 18!

Jesus Christ also explained that the spirit of the law against murder includes bitter anger and hateful name calling (Matthew 5:21-22). The apostle Paul taught the importance of not letting anger gain control over us—not allowing Satan to gain that foothold in our minds (Ephesians 4:26-27). Sadly, Americans fall far short on these measures as well.

**Seventh Commandment: Sexual sins**
God commands in the **Seventh Commandment**: “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).

God designed marriage, sex and family as blessings (Hebrews 13:4), but Satan has inspired increasingly effective attacks on the family and the purity of the sexual bond in marriage.

The National Health Statistics Reports list some depressing figures about how widespread casual sex has become. In the 15-to-44 age group, more than 14 million Americans are living together without being married. And of Americans in the 15-to-44 age group, 66 percent of women and 74 percent of men have had more than one sexual partner; 8.3 percent of the women had 15 partners or more, and 21.4 percent of the men claimed 15 or more partners.

And it starts young. In the 15-to-17 age group, 40 percent of the girls had had sex with a guy, and 10 percent had had some same-sex sexual behavior. For 15- to 17-year-old guys, 47 percent had had sex with a girl, and 1.7 percent had had some same-sex sexual behavior.

The statistics for adultery, divorce, prostitution, abortion, abuse and pornography add to the awful picture of the American family under attack. God is angry with infidelity, divorce and violence (Malachi 2:15-16). He greatly desires strong, loving, faithful marriage and families to prepare us to become part of His family.

**Eighth Commandment: Stealing**

In the **Eighth Commandment** God commands: “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15).

But the U.S. Census Bureau shows that in 2009 there were 408,000 reported robberies and 9,321,000 other property crimes (burglary, larceny/theft and motor vehicle theft).

God hates stealing—it is the opposite of His way of give. Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The apostle Paul instructed former thieves to now work hard to earn enough to give to those in need (Ephesians 4:28).

**Ninth Commandment: Lying**

God commands us in the **Ninth Commandment**: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16). Elsewhere He makes it clear that He considers all lying to be an abomination (Proverbs 6:17; 12:22).

Yet most Americans lie regularly. Psychologist Robert S. Feldman found that “60 percent of people lied at least once during a 10-minute conversation and told an average of two to three lies.” Politicians and CEOs often make the news when they are caught in lies, but most lies are overlooked and have become almost second nature to many Americans. Many parents even lie to their innocent little children about Santa Claus, and many Americans remember the trauma of finding out their parents had lied to them.

Lying is not a little thing to God. God is a God of truth, and lying is foreign and abhorrent to His nature. Jesus Christ identified Satan as the inventor and promoter of lying (John 8:44).

**The 10th Commandment: Wrong desires**
In the **10th Commandment** God commands: “You shall not covet” (Exodus 20:17). Coveting is greatly desiring something that is not lawfully ours. Covetousness is dissatisfaction and a selfish desire to always have more. It destroys the peace of mind that comes from contentment and thankfulness. It can lead to other sins, like stealing and adultery; and God considers this selfish, greedy attitude a destructive sin in itself.

The love of money—greed—is a particularly American form of covetousness, and the apostle Paul warned that it can be “a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10).

Americans believe that if they just had what the wealthy have, they would be happy. If they could just win the lottery, they would be satisfied. But are all millionaires truly happy? The true stories of lottery winners are often more nightmares than dreams come true.

America’s focus on materialism, selfishness and greed does not lead to happiness. God knows that breaking His 10 Commandments only leads to suffering and eventually death.

**What should we do?**

God is angry, but He does not react with impatience and revenge. His anger is directed and controlled by His love and has a purpose. God, even in His anger, has our eternal best interests in mind. If He didn’t love us, He wouldn’t waste the effort to correct us (Hebrews 12:5-6).

What should God’s anger motivate us to do? He wants us to repent. He wants us to turn from our evil, wicked ways and live (Ezekiel 18:23).

God has blessed the United States greatly with some of the richest farmlands and most abundant natural resources in the world. America’s prosperity and freedoms have long been the envy of the world. We believe the reason for these great blessings goes all the way back to the unbreakable promises God gave to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his sons.

With great blessings come great responsibilities. God foresaw that people who are blessed can begin to think, “My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth” (Ezekiel 18:23). So God warned, “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments” (verse 11). Forgetting and disobeying God’s commandments brings automatic penalties and curses (Deuteronomy 8:19-20; 28:15-68).

Those commandments were given as a blessing to humanity—showing us how to live happy and fulfilling lives. But the natural human tendency is to seek the easy way—the way that seems right to us—the way that seems like it will give us the most personal benefit. That human way is often at odds with the way that would truly be best for us—God’s way.

**God wants Americans to repent**

Seeing the pain and suffering we are bringing on ourselves does not make God happy. He hates to see us choose the wrong way, and He hates the results of sin in damaging our relationship with Him and with others. Sin—the antithesis of God’s nature and way of love—makes God angry.
So what does He want us to do?

“‘Now, therefore,’ says the LORD, ‘turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.’ So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm” (Joel 2:12-13).

For our own good, God wants us to repent and change.

It’s vitally important to learn more about what God wants and what you can do. Make the time now to read “The 10 Commandments for Today” and “What Is Repentance?”

**U.S. Economic Collapse: Will It Occur?**

by Larry Greider

The real-time graphic of the U.S. Debt Clock going higher and higher is familiar to many. Where is the money going? Is a U.S. economic collapse coming?

Will America's debt contribute to a U.S. economic collapse?

A trillion dollars is beyond the grasp of ordinary people. What is a trillion dollars? A trillion dollars equals $1,000,000,000,000. That’s a 1 with 12 zeroes to the left of the decimal point. A trillion is a million millions.
As of this writing, the U.S. debt is climbing toward $16 trillion. This amounts to over $50,000 of debt for every citizen. How did one of the wealthiest nations in modern history become so indebted?

Some of the largest areas of U.S. expenditures include Medicare/Medicaid, Social Security, defense/wars, net interest on the debt and federal pensions. Debt comes when we spend more than we earn. Many who go into debt do so with the hope that future earnings will make it possible to pay the deficit. There is a great deal of wealth in America; but increasingly, the wealthiest seem to get richer while more people slip below the poverty line each year.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that “nationally, the poverty rate increased from 14.3 percent in the 2009 ACS [American Community Survey] to 15.3 percent in the 2010 ACS. The number of people in poverty increased from 42.9 million to 46.2 million during the same time period” (“Poverty: 2009 and 2010,” October 2011).

“Overall, 44 million people were on food stamps on a monthly basis in 2011, compared with 17 million in 2000, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture” (“The Number of Ph.D.s on Public Aid Triples in U.S.,” ABC News, May 9, 2012).

**U.S. public debt**

When you don’t have enough money to pay your bills, you must borrow it. This is also true for the United States when obligations have to be met. Government debt is often held by the public in the form of Treasury securities, which are owned by individuals, corporations, the Federal Reserve System, local governments and foreign nations.

Local, state and federal governments largely raise money through taxes, borrowing and selling securities.

So where does the U.S. currently stand in terms of its debt? [USgovernmentspending.com](http://USgovernmentspending.com) provides the following overview: “Federal debt began the 20th century at less than 10 percent of GDP. It jerked above 30 percent as a result of World War I and then declined in the 1920s to 16.3 percent by 1929. Federal debt started to increase after the Crash of 1929, and rose above 40 percent in the depths of the Great Depression.

“Federal debt exploded during World War II to over 120 percent of GDP, and then began a decline that bottomed out at 32 percent of GDP in 1974. Federal debt almost doubled in the 1980s, reaching 60 percent of GDP in 1990 and peaking at 66 percent of GDP in 1996, before declining to 56 percent in 2001. Federal debt started increasing again in the 2000s, reaching 70 percent of GDP in 2008. Then it exploded in the aftermath of the Crash of 2008, reaching 102 percent of GDP in 2011” (“U.S. Federal Debt Since 1900”).

America, once known as one of the richest nations in history, has become a debtor nation. Even though most of the debt is owned by Americans, U.S. debt has increased dramatically in the past decade. It wasn’t too many years ago, during the presidency of Bill Clinton, that the United States had a surplus. Many factors in a free economy can challenge the effectiveness of its financial system. Greed and dishonesty by major companies have taken their toll. Recent scandals in the banking industry involving the sale of complicated financial instruments have undermined public trust.
Curse prophesied

America has on its currency “In God We Trust.” Has this become an empty phrase?

The prophet Malachi in the Old Testament mentions an important principle: “‘If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart’” (Malachi 2:2).

The United States of America has historically been a Christian-professing nation founded on Christian principles that include hard work, reverence for a Creator God and a desire to help others in need. While other nations possessed great national wealth, the spirit of enterprise and opportunity certainly propelled this young nation toward hope and prosperity.

In the Bible the ancient nation of Israel began with blessings from God. Its citizens asked, “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?” (Deuteronomy 4:7).

Blessings for obedience

If a nation worships God in spirit and truth, many blessings are promised. Notice what God told the ancient Israelites.

“And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

“Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

“Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

“The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways” (Deuteronomy 28:2-9).

Continuing to explain the blessings for obedience, God said, “The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow” (verse 12).

As for the status of those who must borrow, the Bible is clear: “The borrower is servant to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7, emphasis added).
The impact of debt

The staggering amount of national and personal debt could have serious repercussions, including a depression. If America does not pay its debts, difficult economic times could come for millions of people, especially those who depend on entitlements from the government.

Wealthy civilizations that were known for their military power and influence have collapsed in the past. Will America join the list of ancient civilizations that lie in ruin? Incurring debt and not repaying it is a mark against the character of an individual as well as a nation. No family or nation can afford to live beyond its means indefinitely. The laws of economics, as well as the laws of God, show that default brings pain on all. God wants mankind to prosper (3 John 1:2), but God will not bless a family or nation that refuses to honor Him and pay its bills.

Is it possible that a great nation with fantastic resources could end in financial ruin? The future is unclear as to what will happen in the years ahead. But it is sure that if Americans forsake their God and seek their own way, the blessings that have sustained us for decades will surely fade away.

Because of sin, the Bible predicts a time of great trial for the descendants of the ancient Israelites and the whole world (Jeremiah 30:7; Mark 13:19). The United States needs to honor God and pay its bills if it wants to be blessed.

For further study, be sure to read “Who Are the United States and Britain in Prophecy?” and “What Is Going to Happen to America?”
What is going to happen to America?

Doomsday is bearing down on America in the minds of many, while others see the future as providing more fantastic opportunities in every way. New inventions, including microchip technology, allow a level of communications and efficiency that most never dreamed of.

While technological advances continue to impress us, there is also the ever-growing “dark” side of man’s nature being revealed in his misrule on the planet. Poverty, war and ethnic tensions continue to worsen.

Even the United States of America—the nation widely recognized as the most powerful and influential nation of the free world—is currently experiencing these difficulties. A Rasmussen poll taken April 9-15, 2012, reported that only 27 percent of likely U.S. voters say the country “is headed in the right direction.”

What does the future hold? Will technology be used to bring about recovery, or will it be used by evil-minded men to bring about our demise? According to the Bible, what is going to happen to America?
The U.S. connection to Abraham

The majority of the people who settled in the United States of America have a unique connection to the biblical patriarch Abraham and his descendants. Genesis 48:13-16 explains how Joseph, Abraham’s great-grandson, was sold into slavery by his brothers yet became a powerful ruler in Egypt.

Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, received from their grandfather Jacob a special blessing that had previously been passed down from Abraham. Prophecies in the Bible reveal that these two brothers—Ephraim and Manasseh—would rise to prominence. Today the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh are largely the peoples of Britain (and related nations) and the United States respectively.

To understand what is going to happen to America, we have to study the biblical prophecies directed toward Manasseh.

The Bible prophesied that the descendants of Manasseh would become a “great” nation and that the descendants of his brother, Ephraim, would “become a multitude of nations” (Genesis 48:19). The United States and Britain (and some of its former colonies, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand) are the nation and group of nations that best fit this biblical description.

Archaeological, linguistic and historical information confirm the modern identities of these nations. For further study, see our articles: “12 Tribes of Israel Today: Who Are They?” “Who Are the United States and Britain in Prophecy?” and “Blessings of Abraham: How They Came to the United States.”

Prophecy fulfilled

As far as military prowess and physical blessings go, the Bible says that in “the last days” the descendants of Joseph would be exceptionally blessed above other nations and even their own brethren—the other nations that would arise from Abraham’s descendants (Genesis 49:1, 22-26). These prophecies have come to pass just as God said.

Summarizing the physical resources that make the United States such an exceptional nation, Stratfor states, “The American geography is an impressive one. The Greater Mississippi Basin together with the Intracoastal Waterway has more kilometers of navigable internal waterways than the rest of the world combined. The American Midwest is both overlaid by this waterway, and is the world’s largest contiguous piece of farmland.

“The U.S. Atlantic Coast possesses more major ports than the rest of the Western Hemisphere combined. Two vast oceans insulated the United States from Asian and European powers, deserts separate the United States from Mexico to the south, while lakes and forests separate the population centers in Canada from those in the United States. The United States has capital, food surpluses and physical insulation in excess of every other country in the world by an exceedingly large margin” (article “The Geopolitics of the United States”).

The United States is indeed a very powerful nation with abundant fertile land, a good climate and laws that allow for creativity, investment, hard work and the ability to enjoy the fruits of one’s labor.
Challenges

In spite of the United States’ vast blessings, poor decisions by its leadership now threaten the way of life so many Americans have come to enjoy. Irresponsible increases in debt and entitlement programs that cannot be sustained at current levels of taxation are problems passed from one administration to the next. On April 19, 2012, the U.S. National Debt Clock estimated that each citizen’s share of the debt was $50,107.86!

Debt is not America’s only problem. “A recent study from Pew Research shows that in most regions of the world, the U.S. image now faces a new challenge: doubts about America’s superpower status” (Julie Crawshaw, “Pew: U.S. Becoming a Second-Rate Power,” July 29, 2011, Moneynews.com).

The article goes on to explain that most people in 15 of 22 nations polled believe that China “will replace or already has replaced the United States as the world’s leading superpower.”

Sexual immorality is another problem. Deviant sexual behavior has become a way of life for many in the United States. God’s laws against living together prior to marriage, marital infidelity and same-sex marriage are now considered archaic and out of date by an increasing number of Americans. Abortion—taking the life of an innocent child prior to birth—has become the common method of birth control for millions of women. Some callously argue that this is their right.

Claiming freedom and superior intellectual understanding, many in the United States think they know better than their Creator. Reflecting this way of thinking, the United States is one of the largest producers of pornography in the world.

The ancient Israelites had similar attitudes toward God’s moral laws. As God said through the prophet Jeremiah, “How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses. They were like well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor’s wife” (Jeremiah 5:7-8).

God also lamented that they did not “know how to blush” (Jeremiah 6:15) and “therefore they shall fall among those who fall; in the time of their punishment they shall be cast down” (Jeremiah 8:12).

History repeats

The history of nations is clear: When people lose their sense of values and reliance on God, bad things happen. The history of ancient Israel shows that war and oppression followed whenever it forgot God. The United States is no exception to this timeless principle. God will not continue to bless a nation that no longer trusts Him or obeys His laws.

The Bible teaches that individuals and nations need to learn to obey God and depend on Him for blessing, safety and understanding. Sadly, humans rarely remember the lessons of history and often repeat the same mistakes generation after generation. Biblical prophecies about Israel and the modern descendants of Israel exist for our benefit if we will only study them and act accordingly. We need to pay attention to what God says, or we will suffer the consequences of poor decisions.
The time of Jacob’s trouble

Because the modern descendants of Abraham continue to follow their ancestors’ pattern of denying God, the Bible predicts a time of severe punishment that will come upon these peoples. Called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” in Jeremiah 30:7, this dire time will occur prior to Christ’s return.

Even though the people of the United States are prophesied to suffer greatly for their sins during this time of trial, the good news is that “he [Jacob] shall be saved out of it.” For more on this subject, see our articles: “Jacob’s Trouble: What Is It?” and “Why Is God Angry With America?”

What you need to do

What is going to happen to America, and what is going to happen to you? While punishment is going to come to the United States and all nations for disobedience to God’s laws, you don’t have to suffer this fate. When Jesus came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, He said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

If you truly believe this message of salvation, your life can change for the better and you can have the peace of mind knowing the wonderful blessings God has in store for you. Learn more about how God wants you to respond in the section on “Repentance.”

Is God on the wrong side of history?

Believing that God’s views are outdated, citizens of Western nations are making sweeping changes to long-held traditions and standards found in the Bible. How did this cultural clash begin? How will it end?

By David Treybig
People these days have different perspectives than God on a wide range of issues. Consider one of the most basic of all activities—human sexuality. God’s instructions were really quite simple. He created marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman, and He sanctioned sexual relations only within marriage (Genesis 2:24).

Like all His laws, He gave these for our good (Deuteronomy 10:13). His laws are beneficial—in fact, they are the only way that really works! For a more thorough explanation of our Creator’s teaching on sexuality, see the articles “What Is Marriage?” and “Questions About Sex Answered by the Bible.”

**Questioning God’s standards**

It didn’t take long before the standards God gave were challenged. People have always done as they pleased. Supposed justification for determining one’s own values regarding sexuality can be found in a number of seemingly innocent questions. What’s wrong with having sexual activity prior to marriage if two people love each other? Isn’t premarital sex harmless, especially if people take precautions against sexual diseases and use contraception if they don’t want a child? What’s wrong with enjoying life?

As for who can marry, many Western nations have approved same-sex marriage. After all, many reason, shouldn’t people be free to marry the person they love? In the end, shouldn’t love win?

People today assume that the answers to all these seemingly innocent questions are clear and there is nothing wrong with abandoning God’s laws. But is this true, or is it just shortsightedly overlooking the real consequences?

**Justifications**

Those who believe premarital sex and same-sex marriage are acceptable offer a number of explanations to justify these changes from God’s original instructions.

Some mistakenly assume that the concept of God was created by man instead of recognizing that God created man. Those accepting this faulty perspective believe we’re free to determine our own standards of conduct apart from what they view as the superstitious, weak-minded and unnecessarily confined ways of living imposed by an imaginary God. In these people’s minds, changes from biblical standards are liberating and represent an advance for mankind.

Even many who believe that God exists find other ways to justify modern changes to what is considered right and wrong. Some of these people believe God originally gave simplistic laws for simplistic people who were incapable of higher reasoning. According to this misguided view, God intended us to develop and shed outdated values as we progressed.

Taking this thinking to its logical conclusion, some believe God is pleased with the changes in morality now championed by the majority of citizens in Western nations.

But can this really be the case? See what the Bible says in our articles “Living Together Before Marriage” and “God’s Problem With Same-Sex Marriage.”
Does God change? Has He switched His position on what is good and what is harmful in human sexuality? Does He now approve of what He originally told us not to do?

If not, is He on the wrong side of history? How did the majority of citizens in Western nations come to hold alternative values to those taught by God?

Sadly, instead of obeying God, Eve succumbed to the serpent’s deceptive message to trust her own shortsighted thinking and feelings instead of trusting God’s eternal perspective. Mankind in general has continually repeated Eve’s tragic mistake.

**Two ways of thinking**

Most of us are familiar with the biblical account of Adam and Eve partaking of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). This incident, which is commonly referred to as original sin for mankind or the fall of man, was a seminal event in the relationship between God and mankind. While each person reaps the rewards or consequences for his or her actions (Ezekiel 18:20), Adam and Eve’s sin set a precedent that humanity has followed ever since. As the Bible states, “All have sinned” (Romans 3:23).

Focus for a moment on the thinking that led Eve astray. As part of his deceptive pitch, the serpent, who was Satan the deceiver (Revelation 12:9), appealed to her ability to reason and make decisions for herself apart from God (Genesis 3:4-5).

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (verse 6). As a result, Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden and lost access to the tree of life (verse 24).

As marvelous as the human mind is—after all, being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) includes being given a mind far superior to any animal—God intended for us to use this ability in harmony with His instructions. The Bible teaches that the human mind, often referred to as the heart in the Bible, “is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9) and that “there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Sadly, instead of obeying God, Eve succumbed to the serpent’s deceptive message to trust her own shortsighted thinking and feelings instead of trusting God’s eternal perspective. Mankind in general has continually repeated Eve’s tragic mistake.

Describing those who followed this terribly mistaken way of thinking, Paul wrote: “Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools. … who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped a nd served the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:21-22, 25).

**Worshipping the mind**

The mental process of disconnecting from God and turning to total reliance on one’s own reasoning has been described as a heady, enlightening, liberating journey by individuals who have traveled this sadly mistaken path. The late Annie Besant (1847-1933), a prominent
British author and women’s rights activist, documented her journey from the Church of England to her break with Christianity in a collection of essays titled My Path to Atheism.

Beginning with what she believed were discrepancies and contradictions within the Bible, she described in her preface how she then began critically studying the teachings of Christianity. As she became more dubious of Christianity and considered other religions, she came to believe that “inspiration belonged to all people alike, and there could be no necessity of atonement. … Thus, step by step, I renounced the dogmas of Christianity. …

“As From Christianity into simple Theism I had found my way; step by step the Theism melted into Atheism; prayer was gradually discontinued, as utterly at variance with any dignified idea of God, and as in contradiction to all the results of scientific investigation. I had taken a keen interest in the later scientific discoveries, and Darwin had done much towards freeing me from my old bonds” (p. vii).

**Similar paths**

Besant’s self-described path from God mirrors the one taken by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Satan told Eve that her eyes would be opened so that she, just like God, would be able to distinguish good and evil for herself (Genesis 3:5). Accepting this faulty premise, Eve used what would later be considered principles of scientific investigation to reach the deadly hypothesis that the forbidden fruit was good to eat (verse 6). But time would show that she was wrong—God was right. She died.

Once people begin trusting their own thinking apart from God, they soon begin looking for others who share their mistaken view. People like Charles Darwin, who theorized about the evolution of man without a divine Creator; Karl Marx, who championed atheism and the failed economics of communism; and Sigmund Freud, who postulated that sexuality is the driving force behind much of human activity, were hailed as great thinkers whose ideas must be accepted.

Though these well-known men are deceased, their misguided, antiscientific theories continue to negatively shape our world today.

**Who is on the right side of history?**

As for who is on the right side of history, the judgment has already been given. The Bible explains that God doesn’t change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8) and that everyone

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**Darwin’s Deception**

Though many mistaken theories and philosophies have been suggested to counter the truths of God, the one offered by Charles Darwin to explain the existence of man without a Creator has been one of the most ardently championed in spite of its flagrant flaws. To believe in Darwinian evolution, one must accept:

- That something (in fact, everything—the universe) spontaneously came from nothing.
- That random chemicals somehow combined to become the incredibly complex and beautifully designed thing we call life.
- That irreducibly complex organs and functions that have no survival value unless they are complete somehow evolved incrementally over millennia of time. (Random mutations—which are overwhelmingly dangerous to survival—and survival of the fittest can’t explain such amazing developments as the eye, for example.)

See the “Does God Exist?” continuing series in this issue of Discern and the many articles in the “Is There a God?” section of the Life, Hope & Truth website for additional explanation.
will stand “before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Amazingly, those who have been blinded and deceived by Satan—those who have never had a full and fair opportunity to understand God’s way of life—will be given this opportunity in the future. To learn more about God’s merciful plan of salvation for mankind, see the articles in the “Plan of Salvation” section of the Life, Hope & Truth website.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God says, “I am God … and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?” (Isaiah 43:12-13).

For the moment it may appear that God is on the wrong side of history. But when Christ returns and the Kingdom of God is established here on earth, the benefits of God’s way will make it obvious who is on the right side. Which side will we be on?

144,000

by David Treybig

Who are the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation? When are they chosen? Do they represent the Church today? Is salvation limited to this special group?

Who are the 144,000 described in Revelation?

The book of Revelation has three references to a group of people numbering 144,000. Revelation 7:4 says, “One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.” Of this group, 12,000 came from each tribe with the exception of the tribe of Dan (verses 5-8). Why Dan is not included is a matter of conjecture.
Revelation 14:1 speaks of “one hundred and forty-four thousand” standing with a Lamb on Mount Zion and having the name of God “written on their foreheads.” The third reference describes this group singing before God and states that “no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth” (verse 3).

To understand who these people are, we need to answer a few basic questions.

**When are the 144,000 sealed?**

The first reference to this group of people in the book of Revelation comes after six seals have been opened, each bringing misery and destruction to earth’s inhabitants. These include four horses (representing false prophets, war, famine and pestilence) followed by a religious inquisition, resulting in the deaths of faithful Christians, and heavenly signs. (For further study on the seals of the book of Revelation, read our article on the “Seven Seals.”)

These events, which will come because of mankind’s misrule and Satan’s efforts to destroy humanity, were prophesied by Christ during His Olivet Prophecy. In this teaching about the future, Jesus described this time as one of “great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22).

After this time of Great Tribulation orchestrated by Satan and misguided humans comes the punishment of God called “the wrath of the Lamb” and “the great day of His wrath” (Revelation 6:16-17). The sealing of the 144,000 takes place after the Tribulation and prior to the wrath of God. As the following chapter explains, the four angels that are poised to bring punishment to the earth from God are told not to harm the earth until this group of people has been sealed (Revelation 7:1-3).

These passages show that the 144,000 will be people who survive the Great Tribulation. They are not faithful saints who have lived and died throughout the ages.

**What is the spiritual state of the 144,000?**

The 144,000 will be people who have been faithful to God. They are called “the servants of our God” (Revelation 7:3), ones “who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins [meaning, they are spiritually pure]. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” (Revelation 14:4).

The book of Revelation identifies those faithful to God as people who “keep the commandments of God” (Revelation 12:17; Revelation 14:12). The last chapter notes: “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14). Unfortunately, many who claim to be Christians today do not keep all of God’s commandments. For additional study, see our articles on “Are the 10 Commandments Upheld in the New Testament?” and “Was the Sabbath Changed to Sunday?”

**Are Church members today included in the 144,000?**
Various churches and groups have claimed that their members or portions of their membership comprise the 144,000. Laying aside human claims, consider what the Bible says about when members of God’s Church are sealed compared to when the 144,000 will be sealed.

In Revelation 7:3 we previously noted that the angels were told not to harm the earth until the servants of God—the 144,000—had been sealed on their foreheads. A seal has the meaning of closing or sealing something up, such as a letter or a book. It also identifies or marks something as being genuine or approved. In Ezekiel 9:4 God told Ezekiel to put a mark on the foreheads of those who sighed and cried over the abominations committed within the city of Jerusalem. Whether this was a literal mark or symbolic because of the way these people thought, they were thus identified for God.

The New Testament also contains examples of people being marked or identified by God as genuine or the future recipients of a special blessing. John 6:27 speaks of Jesus, on whom “God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

Members of the Church are also sealed. Paul described members in Ephesus as people who, “having believed, … were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). Later, he tells them, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). Writing to members at Corinth, Paul spoke of Jesus Christ “who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 1:22).

Those who are led by God’s Holy Spirit are thus sealed, marked or identified as being genuine Christians, children of God and heirs who will receive eternal life (Romans 8:14-16). This sealing takes place at baptism when one receives the Holy Spirit following repentance of his or her sins and immersion in water (Acts 2:38; Acts 19:6).

An important distinction to note is that members of God’s true Church are sealed by God for eternal life when they receive and are led by the Holy Spirit. It thus seems that the 144,000 will be people who, during the Tribulation, repent of their sins and dedicate their lives to God through faith and obedience in order to be sealed for salvation.

Also note that the vision of the 144,000 singing before God’s throne in Revelation 14:1-3 occurs after these people have come through the Great Tribulation preceding Christ’s return and after they have been sealed and changed into spirit. It is not a vision of people currently in heaven as some mistakenly suppose.

Is salvation limited to only the 144,000?

Revelation 7 identifies the 144,000 as being 12,000 from each tribe of Israel with the exception of the tribe of Dan. Two significant points to note here include the fact that the descendants of the ancient nation of Israel are still important to God and that salvation is not limited to this group. In addition to the 144,000, another innumerable multitude will likewise stand before God in “white robes” (Revelation 7:9, 13), symbolizing righteous living (Revelation 3:4-5).

This great multitude will include people from “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues [languages]” (Revelation 7:9). As they stand before the Lamb (Christ), a question is asked
about who these people are and where they came from. The answer is: “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (verse 14). Because of their response to God, they will serve “before the throne of God” (verse 15).

What is going to be the cause of so many people turning to God during the Tribulation? The Bible reveals that two representatives of God called the “two witnesses” will prophesy on God’s behalf for three and a half years (Revelation 11:3). During all the turmoil and difficult circumstances that will accompany the Tribulation, the ministry of these servants of God will bring about the addition of many sons and daughters to God’s eternal family. These people will come from both the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude.

For further study, see “12 Tribes of Israel Today: Who Are They?” and “Two Witnesses.”