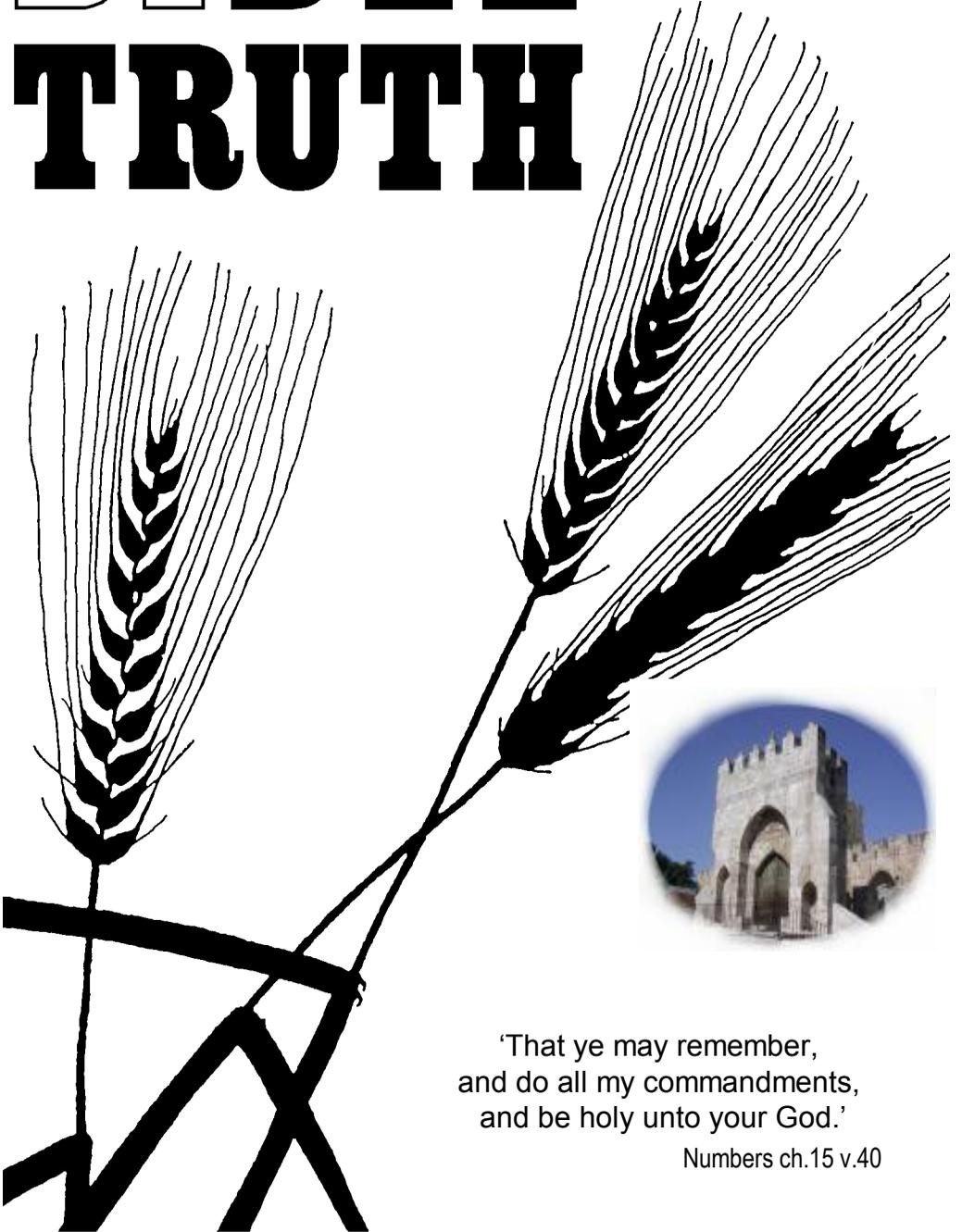


# BIBLE TRUTH

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‘That ye may remember,  
and do all my commandments,  
and be holy unto your God.’

Numbers ch.15 v.40

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# ***ISRAEL IN THE LAST DAYS***

## ***- Their Identity***

***by the late Jon Ellis***

When war on Iraq was looming in 2002, and a bond with Britain and the USA was developing by taking a stand against the cruel and evil regime of Saddam Hussein, it gradually became clear that the two nations were going to stand alone against strong opposition from around the world. When I looked back to the dreadful event of 11 September 2001 there appeared something rather significant in Dr R.T. Kendal's message that followed, under the title 'The Day That Changed the World'.

'We pray for those who make decisions and are making them now. And we pray that you will give to those in positions of authority, cool heads and warm hearts. That they will not lie motivated by vengeance or hate, but by wisdom. And so we pray for President Bush, and for Tony Blair. We think of other heads

of state and we thank you for the way our two nations in particular, often referred to as having a special relationship, are finding it more special than ever. But grant us your overruling guidance and clear wisdom. ... On 11 September 2001, what is being called America's 'second Pearl Harbour' marked what I personally believe will turn out to be the beginning of the end so far as events that lead to the Second Coming of Jesus are concerned. The events of 7 December 1941 and 11 September 2001 not only brought Britain and America closer together, but changed the world.' Dr R.T. Kendal, minister of Westminster Chapel 1976 - 2002

From this my thoughts also turned back over thirty-five years to the teaching of a saintly servant of God, the Rev. C.S. McKelvey. After his death in 1976 the following was recorded,

'For Mac there was no gap between the world of the Bible and the world of nations, newspapers and international affairs. Bible prophecy predicted the future of the nations, while newspapers described the fulfilments. It should be understood of course that he lived in the world of the Bible rather than in the one described in the newspapers. For he was completely persuaded which of the two gave him the truest account of what was going on in the world, and the clearest view of its future.

Certainly he was very much in the world, but he was definitely not of it. He lived in, and was of, that world ever inhabited by the prophets who perceive clearly the reality of those angelic beings, the princes who stand for nations, the hand of evil manipulating the nations of the ungodly, and the arm of the Lord, ever victorious, fulfilling His purpose throughout the centuries and through His people Israel. So he always interpreted the newspapers in the light of the Bible rather than making the common mistake of trying to do the reverse. In his mind he perceived the nations only according to their correct biblical names, titles and origins, and he would often so name them in conversation, in preaching and when writing.

He had no time for the empty eggshells of earthly-mindedness. Instead he emphasised only God's plans and His love for His people, showing that He was their only claim to greatness. He preached against personal and national sin and presented the Lord Jesus Christ as God's only answer. Thus, he preached the need for personal and national salvation and proclaimed his belief in the power of the blood of Jesus to accomplish both. Often he was accused of being a futurist, though no self-respecting futurist would hold with most of his teaching!

Certainly Mac taught that there would be fulfilments in the near future of prophecies which historicists regard as cast-iron examples of prophecy totally fulfilled long ago. Yet Mac had no quarrel with these opponents for he recognised fully the historical fulfilment. Where Mac stood apart in his interpretation was in recognising more fully than most the amazing circular movements in history whereby events repeat themselves and circumstances reshape almost exactly as before, so that prophecy can have double and even multiple real fulfilments'.

*The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord; Bible Truth Publishers, 1979*

It is helpful now to compare these recent events that have involved Britain and the USA and their role in international relations with God's Word and how it relates to our two nations that have a common root.

The first five books of the Old Testament help to form a 'basis of faith' concerning God's people Israel, and the remainder of the Bible has its foundation laid in these five books. Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul regularly quoted from these early pages, to form a fundamental part of Christian teaching. From them we learn the wonder of creation, the fall of man into sin, God's dealing with sin, God's promises of a Saviour, mankind's salvation through faith and the calling out of a people to be a blessing to the nations. From these books the Prophets of old were built up in the faith, enabling them to teach and lead God's people Israel.

It will be found from scripture that Israel never remained a united body of people for each had their own traditions in a similar way to our church traditions today. They had their own unique way of proclaiming what God had done for them which explained who Israel was and her relationship to God. What we are reading is God's revelation, not to be read just as a secular historical document, otherwise we are unable to receive the full message the Bible contains.

### **Three sets of prophecies**

There are three sets of prophecies, all of which provide some evidence of the modern day identity of the descendants of Israel.

The first arises from those astonishing predictions about the double portion of the Abrahamic blessing to fall on the people of Joseph which can be found in Genesis ch.48 vv.21-22.

The second, in Genesis ch.48 vv.1-20, relates to Jacob's prediction of an eventual separation between Ephraim and Manasseh. The forecast is made that descendants of the two boys would grow together into a great people. Eventually they would experience a parting, with each group enjoying continuing prosperity and blessings in their own right. Looking backward in time, we can locate the people of Joseph in history by identifying the modern-day peoples who have fulfilled the predictions at the time and in the way that prophecy leads us to expect.

The third set of prophecies, scattered liberally throughout the writings of both major and minor prophets, foretells of monumental end time events yet to overtake the Israelite peoples. These demonstrate that a physical, national people of Israel exist today to help us understand the work of the Church of God as the return of Jesus Christ and His rule over the all the earth draws near. We now examine in order each of these three sets of prophecies, how they have been fulfilled, and what lies ahead for Israel.

The History of the 12 tribes of Israel is widely known until the reigns of David and Solomon, about 1000 BC. By this time, the larger group of 9-10 tribes in the north of Palestine, were collectively called 'Israel', while the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and part of Levi, in the south, were collectively called 'Judah'.

'David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.'

2 Samuel ch.5 vv.4-5

From 732 BC until circa 667 BC the 9-10 tribes of 'Israel' were taken captive into the northern part of the Assyrian Empire, in the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea. According to the Assyrian record found on the Taylor Prism, 200,150 people of 'Judah' were taken with them. These people never returned to Palestine.

'... the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.'

2 Kings ch.17 v.23

The remainder of the Kingdom of 'Judah' were taken captive by the Babylonians, about one hundred years later, from 604-581 BC. These were the people who became known as the 'Jews'. Some of

them returned to Palestine after 70 years in Babylon, and their descendants were still living there at the time of Christ.

Confusion and misunderstanding arises when Israel is so frequently and incorrectly referred to as 'Jews' prior to 604 BC.

The History of the Jews is well known, but the 9-10 tribes of Israel who were taken by the Assyrians have apparently disappeared from the pages of history. Speaking through the prophets, God said many things concerning the nation of Israel, which as we shall find, have not been fulfilled by either the Jewish people, nor the Christian Church.

*The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 12 p. 249 informs us,

'If the Ten Tribes have disappeared, the literal fulfilment of the prophecies would be impossible. If they have not disappeared, obviously they must exist under a different name'.

*The Works of Flavius Josephus*, Book 11 ch.5 adds to this,

'Wherefore there are but two tribes 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'.

The promises of God are 'Yea and Amen', therefore the 'lost tribes' of the House of Israel must still be in existence, somewhere in the world. God's promises to Israel, as they are recorded in the prophetic writings, will now be examined.

First, the Northern Kingdom of Israel would develop into a group of at least three nations. As we have seen, Genesis ch.48 records Jacob blessing two of his grandchildren, Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, and v.19 is a prophetic statement.

'... he [Manasseh] also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.'

In fact this prophecy is a development of a promise given to Jacob himself.

'... a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, ...'.

Genesis ch.35 v.11

From the son Manasseh was to come a 'great people', and from Ephraim a 'multitude of nations'. Now a multitude (or fulness as the text states) of nations must be at least two nations. Therefore Ephraim and Manasseh together, would develop into a

group of at least three nations. To date this prophecy has not been fulfilled in the following,

- ‘Judah’ and hence the Jews — because ‘Judah’ never contained the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.
- ‘Israel’ and ‘Judah’, before their captivities, because these were only two nations as stated above, ‘Judah’ never contained the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.
- The Christian Church—because the church is not a national entity, and has no connection with the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The church is a spiritual entity being comprised of those individuals out of every nation who have experienced a spiritual rebirth through repentance for sin, and faith in Jesus Christ. To be inheritors of the kingdom of God, all men must experience this new birth, whether they be Israelites or Gentiles.

‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.’

John ch.3 vv.6-7

Now Ephraim and Manasseh became the two leading tribes in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and as ‘Israel’ was only one nation up to its captivity, this prophecy could only be fulfilled during the subsequent history of these so-called, ‘lost tribes of Israel’. Thus ‘Israel’ must have become a group of at least three nations.

These nations would still be in existence in ‘The Last Days’ as Jacob’s prophecy given on his deathbed tells us.

‘And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. ... Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall.’

Genesis ch.49 vv.1 & 22

Note that the ‘tribe of Joseph’ is composed of the two tribes Ephraim and Manasseh. In these ‘last days’, in which we now live, the tribe of Joseph is to exist as a separate entity from the tribe of Judah, which is given a separate blessing in Genesis ch.49 v.8. Joseph is said to be ‘fruitful’, with many ‘branches’ or ‘daughters’ (marginal ref.) i.e. not a small people. This prophecy does not therefore apply to the following two groups.

- The Jews, who are a small people and who are not descended from the tribe of Joseph.
- The Christian Church, which is throughout the world rather than just connected with the tribe of Joseph.

Therefore there must be a large group of Israelites in the world today containing the tribe of Joseph.

The people of Israel would also move from Palestine to a land of their own where they would live in safety. At about 1000 BC, while David was reigning over the peoples of 'Israel' and 'Judah' in the promised land of Palestine, the Prophet Nathan spoke the following words to him,

'Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime,'

2 Samuel ch.7 v.10

The fact that this was said while the people of Israel were living in Palestine, shows that the place to which they were to be moved must be a land other than Palestine. Again it may be deduced that this prophecy has not been fulfilled in these other two groups.

- The Jews, because they have never dwelt in a place of safety and moved no more, but have been continually afflicted and persecuted throughout their history and have always been moving from one place to another.
- The Christian Church, because it is in all lands, and has not dwelt in safety but has been continually persecuted. Moreover, this cannot have a future millennial fulfilment, as the millennial centre of the church will be in Palestine. Therefore there must be a group of Israelites in the world in whom this prophecy has found fulfilment.

Israel would be God's servant nation (Isaiah ch.41 vv.8-9), living in isles and coastlines (Isaiah ch.49 vv.1-3), far from Palestine in a north-westerly direction (Jeremiah ch.31 vv.8-10). From this place they will, one day, return to Palestine (Zechariah ch.8 vv.7-8).

At this point it may help to look closer at the prophecy of Hosea because, Hosea is the only one of the prophets to come from the Northern Kingdom who primarily directs his attention to the North, whilst also making reference to Judah.

'Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints. ... Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.'

Hosea chs 11 v.12 & 12 v.1

The Lord's relationship with Israel is graphically demonstrated by Hosea the prophet whilst living in the final days of the Northern Kingdom's existence. He saw Israel's failure to acknowledge God but that God's relationship with Israel was one of love.

In Hosea the intimacy of God's covenant relationship with Israel is illustrated both as the husband to wife, and father to a child. In spite of Israel's pagan worship, her international intrigue and materialism, with God's harsh response and consequent judgement, God's compassion and love confirmed that His Covenant with Israel will not be broken.

Hosea pointed out that God had protected Israel as a perfect loving father, doing everything he could for her, but she had departed from her Heavenly Father's protection without bothering any more to seek the help and guidance of her God. However, Father God went out and sought Israel, found her, and brought her back to Himself, to discipline her and to direct her in the way she should go. But again and again she would wander and turn to the Canaanite gods, and the idols she made. Hosea tried desperately to persuade Israel to return to her God, the one who loved her.

In spite of this, Israel remained disobedient, so a final drastic step had to be taken once and for all to prevent Israel being cut off and destroyed. Now came the time for this final discipline, so God caused the Assyrians to conquer Israel and set up a puppet king over the Northern Kingdom causing her to lose her political independence. However, God was not willing to let this be the end, so through Hosea, God describes his deep love for Israel in passionate language.

'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? ... my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.'

Hosea ch.11 vv.8 & 9

It is here we see God talking to Himself, revealing His Nature, not of God making right and wrong balance as a credit and debit account to see if Israel earned blessing or deserved punishment. God was a loving Father who was personally involved with His people. He enters into a relationship of care, suffering and agony over the actions of His children. God says, I cannot give you up Ephraim; you are my son, Israel, I have formed you, loved you and cared for you. I have done so much for you I am unable to destroy you.

God says, my love will not let me execute in anger, I will not destroy you. Man decides in anger and frustration to destroy, but God says, I cannot act like man, my nature is one of care, concern, love, hope and compassion. I will give Israel one last chance.

The apostle Paul more than anyone would be aware of the Covenant made to Israel relating to Israel/Judah as well as the Jewish remnant. Paul tackles the subject in depth in his Epistle to the Romans (ch.9 vv.10-11) where he quotes from the Book of Hosea applying the principle to the Gentiles.

'As he saith also in Osee [Hosea], I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.'

Romans ch.9 vv.25-26

In these latter days, we are able to understand more fully the love of God and the result of that chance, the opportunity God has given to Israel in the undeserved blessings which in His grace he has bestowed upon the Anglo-Saxon people. Not because they were or are faithful, but because of His love, and the promises He made to Israel through the prophets.

So we find that from the history of Israel in the Old Testament and our Anglo-Saxon nations, the same pattern emerges, one of spiritual decline and renewal. He only responds when He sees our desire to seek Him. The Lord does a new thing each time because He is faithful through His Grace. The desire for a 'new thing' means a new structure, not shoring up old and outdated traditions however good and successful they once were. The message remains the same but the method and presentation is determined by God as seen from past revivals.

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