

Restored Truth Bible Study #13 - The Identity of Israel

July 27, 2013

People attribute the greatness of the United States to many different things. Some believe it comes from the Constitution; some believe it stems from economic freedom; others say it is the vast amount of opportunities people have to pursue what they want to do. Sen. Ted Cruz, TX, in the 101st Commencement speech of Hillsdale College, spoke to what he thought made the United States great.

He gave two reasons for the greatness of America.

First: "Their rights come not from kings or queens, or even from presidents, but from God."

Second, "They (the Founding Fathers) inverted their understanding of sovereignty. Which means that they viewed power coming not from the top down, but up from 'We the People'."

Toward the end of the speech, the senator made the following comment:

"We are all children of those who risked everything for liberty. That's the DNA of what it means to be an American, to value freedom and opportunity above all."

The late Rush Limbaugh, often said: "The greatness of the United States lies in our DNA." As always, "Rush was right."

In dealing with this Restored Truth Bible Study topic, here are some questions to consider:

- What is the real reason behind America's greatness?
- Why has a nation as big and powerful as the United States become such a force in the world for over two centuries?
- Who are these Americans and where did they come from?

It's important to understand that the history of America did not begin in 1776 with the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Nor did it begin in 1620 when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts. Of course, it wasn't called Massachusetts then. To understand the history of America, one has to go back several thousand

years in history and come forward. Do you realize the history of America can be found through a study of God's word the Holy Bible? Yes, that's right. By studying the Bible you can understand the history of America. On top of that, do you realize that without understanding this history, God's Church would be unable to correctly understand the Bible?

Let us understand a very crucial point about this world we live in. This is what God did in response to Adam and Eve's disobedience in partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Gen. 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

God cut mankind off from having access to Him and His Holy Spirit, which means access to the knowledge of God. We live in a world that is cut off from God and has been since shortly after the creation of mankind. Yet even though God has cut the world off from Himself, He has always been involved in the affairs of mankind. He has always continued to work out His plan. Hebrews 11 chronicles, from the very beginning, God's selection of various individuals to carry out His plan here on the earth.

Heb. 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God...[The word 'worlds' simply refers to time] so that the things which are seen...[The things we see in our world] were not made of things which are visible.

God did not take physical materials to create this physical world we live in. He spoke and earth existed. Verses 4, 5, and 7 of Hebrews 11, show that God worked with Abel, Enoch, and Noah before the flood. Those three names take you from the very beginning of the creation of mankind, (Abel was the second son of Adam and Eve), to the destruction of the flood. Verses 8 and 11 show God worked with Abraham and Sarah, his wife. Verses 20 and 21 show God worked with Abraham's son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob. God also worked through one of Jacob's sons, Joseph. God also worked with Moses who brought the descendants of Jacob out of Egyptian captivity. This provides a span of time from the flood to the Israelites going into the Promised Land. There are many more examples that could be given; but it is important to stay focused on the history of the United States, which begins through God's work with Abraham.

A study of ancient history is crucial to understanding the greatness of the United States.

Gen. 12:1 Now the Eternal had said to Abram...[Abram means High Father in the Hebrew] get out of your country

from your family, and from your father's house, to a land I will show you...[That's quite a tall order, for Abram to just get up and leave his family. If he does, God says:] (vs 2) I will make you a great nation, I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. (vs 3) 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...

God makes a couple of promises to Abram for his obedience. First, God was going to make Abram's name great, and second, through Abram all nations of the earth would be blessed. Abram did exactly what God said to do

(vs 4) Abram departed...[He left his family, which is a tremendous example of obedience, and how people should respond to what God says, instead of making excuses and justifications. Simply look at what God says; hear what God says; and when understood, do what God says. Abram did that. Abram left Ur of the Chaldees] (vs 7) Then the Eternal appeared to Abram and said, to your descendants I will give this land: and there he built an altar to the Eternal who had appeared to him...

When God made this statement, Abram was in the land of Canaan.

This promise is made a second time to Abram. Gen. 13:14 *Then the Eternal 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 (vs 15) for all the land which you see, I will give to you, and your descendants...[Notice-] forever (vs 16) 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...[Those who were going to come from Abram were going to be a very large, innumerable population of people] (vs 17) Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width; for I give it to you.*

Now there was a problem with this promise on the surface. To make the descendants of Abram as numerous as the dust on the earth was not possible at the time because Abram didn't have any children of his own.

We will see that Abram understands this problem quite well. Gen. 15:1 *After these things the words of the Eternal came to Abram in a vision saying, do not be afraid, Abram: I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward. (vs 2) But Abram said, Lord God, what will you give me seeing I go childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? (vs 3) Then Abram said, look, you have given me no offspring and the one born in my house is my heir. (vs 4) And behold, the word of the Eternal came to him saying, this one shall not be your heir; but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir...[God is very clear. He is making a promise to Abraham that he is going to have a child, one that comes from his own body.] (vs 5) 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...*

Again, God is making a promise to Abraham that his descendants are going to be quite numerous, too numerous to count, as the dust of the earth or as the stars of heaven. Verse six again provides a great example of how people should respond to God. (vs 6) *And he...[Abram] believed in the Eternal; and he accounted it to him for righteousness.* God accounted Abram's belief, as righteousness.

So, the question each person should answer is, do we believe in God, or do we believe God? There's a big difference between the two. If people believe God, they believe what He says; they understand what He says; and they do what He says. This is what it means to believe God. That's the type of belief Abram showed.

After Abram has a dream showing that his descendants are going to be in captivity for 400 years, the Bible shows the boundaries of the land that God intended to give to the descendants of Abraham.

Gen. 15:18 *On the same day the Eternal made a covenant with Abram saying, to your descendants I've given this land, from the river of Egypt...[the Nile] to the great river, the River Euphrates.* The area of land God intended to give Abram's descendants extended from the Nile River in Egypt to the Euphrates River in Iraq. This was the territory of the Promised Land that God said he would give to the descendants of Abram. And remember, they were to maintain possession of this area forever.

In time, God changes Abram's name. Gen. 17:1 *When Abram was ninety years old, the Eternal appeared to Abram and said to him, I am Almighty God; walk before me and be blameless...[or become blameless. Abram was not perfect] (vs 2) And I will make my covenant between me and you and will multiply you exceedingly...[Understand that Abram still did not have a child of his own] (vs 3) Then Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him saying (vs 4) As for me, behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be a father...[Notice-] of many nations...[That's going to play into the name-change God gives to Abram] (vs 5) No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations...[Abraham means, father of a multitude, or a father of many nations] (vs 6) I will make you exceedingly fruitful, I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. (vs 7) And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you, and your descendants after you. (vs 8) 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.*

God not only changed the name of Abram, but he also changed the name of his wife Sarai.

Gen. 17:15 *Then God said to Abraham, as for Sarai, your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name... [Which means princess] (vs 16) And I will bless her, and also give you a son by her... [Now, Abraham is going to have a son] I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be from her. (vs 17) And Abraham fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart...[Unlike his wife who laughed out loud; Abraham had the same reaction except he kept it inside] Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?...*

This is logical human thinking for people passed the age of childbearing. Abraham had another son by Sarah's handmaid, Hagar, named Ishmael. Abraham wanted Ishmael to be able to partake in the promises God had made. But God was very clear that was not going to be the case.

(vs 19) *Sarah your wife shall bear you a son; you shall call his name Isaac: I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his descendants after him.* The covenant made with Abraham was going to be passed on to his son Isaac. To secure this covenant, God would put Abraham through the test of sacrificing his only son, Isaac.

Gen. 22:1 *And it came to pass after these things, that God tested Abraham...[To prove whether Abraham was going to be faithful and obedient or not] and said to him, Abraham, and he said, here I am. (vs 2) Then he said, now take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Mariah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you. (vs 3) So Abraham rose early in the morning...[Notice, Abraham didn't procrastinate. He didn't lie in bed. He got up. He got busy doing what God told him to do] and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son, and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him...[Abraham bound Isaac was ready to sacrifice his only son when God stopped him. Abraham had already made the commitment. He was committed to doing what God told him to do] (vs 12) And the angel said to Abraham, do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him: for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.* Abraham proved his obedience; and God offered Abraham a ram, which he sacrificed as a burnt offering. Then the angel spoke a second time.

Gen. 22:15 *Then the angel of the Eternal called to Abraham a second time out of heaven (vs 16) And said, by myself I have sworn, says the Eternal, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son (vs 17) In 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 your enemies.* This refers to all of the major sea-gates of the world, through which this world's economic commerce traffic travels] (vs 18) *In your seed all*

the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed my voice.

There were two promises given to Abraham, which already been previously covered. First, is the promise of race, which God was going to carry out through the descendants of Abraham. The second, is the promise of grace. In verse 18 it says, 'in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,' this refers to Jesus Christ, who came from, and is a descendent of Abraham. Joseph, Christ's human father came from the line of Abraham found in Matthew 1. Because of Abraham's actions, God was bound to deliver on His promises. He would multiply Abraham's descendants and bless them with great material prosperity. And He would spiritual bless all of mankind by sending His Son Jesus Christ to be its Savior.

Notice how these promises were passed to Isaac after Abraham's death.

Gen. 26:1 There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines near Gerar. (vs 2) And the Eternal appeared to him, and said, do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. (vs 3) Dwell in this land, and I will be with you, and bless you; for to you, and your descendants, I give all these lands...[Referring to the land of Canaan] and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. (vs 4) And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; and I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed...[These are the same promises God made to Abraham. God is now making these same promises to Isaac] Why were those promises made? (vs 5) Because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

This shows the importance God puts on obedience. And there is, contrary to what others may say, a connection between obedience and blessings, both spiritual and physical. When people obey God, they are blessed. When people disobey God, people are cursed, as will be seen later in this study.

Isaac had two sons of his own. His wife, Rachel had the same difficulty of getting pregnant as his mother had.

Gen. 25:21 Isaac pleaded with the Eternal for his wife because she was barren: and the Eternal granted his plea and Rebekah his wife conceived. (vs 22) But the children struggled together within her...[These two little fetuses fought against each other inside their mother's womb] and she said, if all is well, why am I like this? And she went to inquire of the Eternal...[There was quite a bit of activity inside this woman's midsection. It obviously was not comfortable, so she went to God to find out the reason why] (vs 23) The Eternal said to her, two nations are in your womb, two people shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the

younger...[Then the twins were born] (vs 24) When her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed, there were twins in her womb. (vs 25) The first one came out red. It was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. (vs 26) Afterward his brother came out and his hand took hold of Esau's heel. His name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

Esau was the oldest; and in God's way of doing things, the birthright always goes to the oldest. But in this case the birthright wasn't going to go to the oldest. It was going to go to the number two child. Instead of waiting to receive that blessing, Jacob, in collusion with his mother, stole the blessing. Notice the details of this birthright blessing as Isaac passed it on to the Jacob.

Gen. 27:27 And he came near, and kissed him, and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and he blessed him...[Jacob had dressed like Esau to deceive his father who could not see very well] And he said surely the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Eternal has blessed. (vs 28) Therefore, may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine...[Material blessings being passed on] (vs 29) Let people serve you and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you: Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you.

These blessings given by promise to Abraham and Isaac are now being passed on to Jacob. Jacob had to leave his family because his brother Esau was very angry that Jacob had stolen his birthright blessing. So, Jacob fled. While Jacob was in the wilderness, he had a dream. In this dream he saw a ladder going up to heaven with angels going back and forth on it. At the top of the ladder was God.

Gen. 28:13 And behold, the Eternal stood above, and said, I am the Eternal God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac: the land on which you lie I will give to you, and your descendants...[This is the land of Canaan. Again, the promise to give this land to Jacob and his descendants is made] (vs 14) Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth, you shall spread abroad to the west, and the east, to the north, and to the south: and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed...[Once again God extends the promises of race and grace to Jacob] (vs 15) Behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.

Jacob had to leave the land of Canaan for a while but would later return.

Jacob did leave. He went to dwell with his mother's brother, Laban. Laban had a daughter named Rachel whom Jacob fell in love with. But just as he tricked Esau, so Rachel's father tricked Jacob. Instead of giving Rachel's hand

in marriage to Jacob, he gave Rachel's oldest sister Leah to Jacob instead. Jacob did marry Rachel in exchange for seven additional years of service to his father-in-law.

Jacob had 12 sons by four different women. By his wife Leah he had six sons. Their names are Ruben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Rachel was infuriated by the fact that her sister was giving children to Jacob. So, she took her handmaid, Bilhah, so Jacob could bear children for her. In essence, these children would become Rachel's because of her inability to have children. Through Bilhah, Jacob had two sons, Dan and Naphtali. Leah had stopped bearing children for a while, so she gave her handmaid, Zilpah to Jacob. She delivered Jacob two sons, Gad and Asher. Finally, Rachel was able to conceive own children with God's help. She delivered her first child named Joseph. Later she delivered a second son named Benjamin. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin. It's important to understand the order in which these sons were born. Gen. 35:23-26 lists the order: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. Leah bore six sons; Bilhah bore two sons; Zilpah bore two sons; and Rachel bore two sons for a total of twelve sons.

It's important to keep in mind that Jacob had twelve sons. The reason for this will be later explained in this study.

Before moving on, God's involvement in the birth of Abraham's descendants must be acknowledged. Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel all had problems with becoming pregnant. It was not until God opened their wombs that they were able to conceive and have children. This shows God's selection in choosing to work through the line of Abraham. Had God not intervened in the lives of these women, Isaac and Jacob would never have been born. This is a point that should not be overlooked.

God also changed the name of Jacob. The word Jacob in Hebrew means heel catcher referring to the grabbing of his brother's heel when being born. It also means supplanter, which is what Jacob did in taking his brother's birthright. As Jacob is returning to the land of Canaan, he is reunited with his brother Esau. Prior to meeting Esau, Jacob engages in a wrestling match.

Gen. 32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day...[morning] (vs 25) When he saw...[The one wrestling with Jacob] that he...[the one wrestling against Jacob] did not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his hip and the socket of Jacob was out of joint as he wrestled with him (vs 26) and he said let me go for the day breaks. But he...[Jacob] said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. (vs 27) So he said to him what is your name? And he said Jacob. (vs 28) And he said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel: for you have struggled with God, and with men, and have prevailed.

The word Israel means he will rule as God. A prince with God is another definition. So, Jacob's name was changed to Israel. After reuniting with Esau, Jacob returned to Canaan. From this point forward the story of Jacob and his sons focuses on Joseph. He was sold into Egyptian slavery by his brothers. A severe famine eventually caused Jacob and his eleven sons to relocate to Egypt when it was learned Joseph was alive and the second in command of Egypt. As Jacob was getting ready to die, he called his son Joseph to pass on the birthright blessing. Joseph brought with him his two sons who had been born in Egypt.

Gen. 48:3 *Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me... [Which was covered earlier] (vs 4) And said to me, behold, I will make you fruitful, and multiply you, and make of you a multitude of people; and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession. (vs 5) And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt; are mine; as Ruben and Simeon, they shall be mine... [Jacob adopted the two sons of Joseph as his own] (vs 11) And Israel said to Joseph, I had not thought to see your face: but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring... [Remember for a long time Jacob thought Joseph was dead. What Jacob is saying here is not only have I seen you, but I've also gotten to see your sons who have been born to you] (vs 12) So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. (vs 13) And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left-hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near to him...*

Picture Joseph facing his father with one son on his left hand and the other son on his right hand. He is bringing them straight to Jacob. Joseph understands the birthright blessing is go to the firstborn. This is why Manasseh, the firstborn, standing on Joseph's left side was facing Jacob's right hand.

Notice what Jacob did. Gen. 48:14 *Then Israel stretched out his right hand, and he laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head... [Who was the oldest] guiding his hands knowingly for Manasseh was the firstborn...*

Jacob knew exactly what he was doing in conferring this blessing. He crossed his hands, placing his right hand, which should go on the older son's head, and putting it on the younger son's head; and taking his left hand and putting it on the older son's head.

(vs 15) *He blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day (vs 16) The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads... [Notice] let my name be named upon them... [What name is that? It is Israel, the name that God gave to Jacob when he changed it]*

and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth...

Jacob here is speaking of the descendants that would come from Ephraim and Manasseh. When Joseph saw what was happening, he spoke up to his father in disagreement. (Gen. 48:17) *Now when Joseph saw that his father had laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him...*[He didn't like the fact that he was passing a blessing that should go to the older son on to his second son] *So he took hold of his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. (vs 18) And Joseph said to his father, not so, my father; for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head. (vs 19) But his father refused...*[Jacob knew what he was doing. Jacob was inspired by God to do this] *and said, I know, my son, I know: he also shall become a great people. He also shall be great...*[Referring to Manasseh, the older son] *but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations...*[The older son was to become a great nation; the younger son was to become a greater group or company of nations] (vs 20) *So he blessed them that day saying, by you Israel will bless, saying, my God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh (vs 21) And thus he shall set Ephraim before Manasseh.*

Notice how Jacob was very clear in verse 16 to let his name was to be named upon them. This is very important in connection with the fact that the descendants of these two boys would be a great multitude and company of nations and a great nation.

After Jacob's death, his sons and their families stayed in Egypt. Their descendants did not leave, and his sons died. For 400 years these descendants were in Egyptian captivity. At the end of 400 years, just as God told Abraham, it would be time for them to come out of Egypt. God spells out His intent for bringing the Israelites out of captivity to Moses on Mount Sinai in the burning bush.

Ex. 3:6 *Moreover he said...*[God] *I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...*[This is the same God who dealt with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand the consistency of who is involved here] *and Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. (vs 7) And the Eternal said, I have surely seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. (vs 8) So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from the land, to a good and large land, a land flowing with milk and honey; to the place of the Canaanites. And a bunch of other '-ites' that lived in that area. God is bringing these ancient descendants back to the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

What was God's purpose for bringing the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity? Because God wanted to specifically work through the Israelites. He had selected their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is where His work

with Israel began. He started off small with one man, Abraham. Now Abraham's descendants had expanded over the years to quite a large number. God spells out His purpose for working through Israel in telling Moses:

Ex. 19:4 *You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself. (vs 5) Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice...[If the Israelites will obey what God says] and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all peoples: for all the earth is mine. (vs 6) And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.*

God wanted the Israelites to become a kingdom of priests, to be a kingdom of teachers, to be an example nation to the rest of the nations of the earth at that time. But Israel did not cooperate with God. They, like Adam and Eve, wanted to do things their own way. They did not follow the obedient example of their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

II Kings 17:16 *So they left...[Referring to the northern ten tribes. There was a split in Israel over taxation, very similar to the split that took place between the British and the colonists of America] So they left all the commandments of the Eternal their God, made for themselves molded images, two calves, made a wooden image, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal...[Israel pursued false gods] (vs 17) And they caused...[The adults who were responsible for-] their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire ... [Today the modern-day equivalent of passing a child through a literal sacrificial fire, alive, is the practice of abortion] They caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire. They practiced witchcraft, and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Eternal, to provoke him to anger. (vs 18) Therefore the Eternal was very angry with Israel, and removed them from his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone. (vs 19) Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the Eternal their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. (vs 20) And the Eternal rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers until he cast them out of his sight...[The northern ten tribes of Israel went into Assyrian captivity, and about 120 years later, Judah went into Babylonian captivity] (vs 21) And he tore Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, king: and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Eternal, and made them commit a great sin. (vs 22) For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; and they did not depart from them (vs 23) Until the Eternal removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria as it is to this day.*

Israel rejected God, and God punished them for their actions.

God made tremendous promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's promises to Abraham were promises that He

had to fulfill because of Abraham's obedience. However, God did not fulfill those promises in the days of the ancient Israelites, because of their disobedience, God punished them. God would wait for two millennia to fulfill these material promises to the descendants of Abraham.

So, the question that must be asked is: What nations today in modern history have become a great multitude of nations and a great nation? There are only two nations on earth that fit this biblical description. It applies to the people of Great Britain and the United States of America.

The rise of the British Empire began in the 1600s and continued through the 1800s. Great Britain amassed territories and colonies around the world. It became the world's most influential country. Many are very familiar with the saying 'The sun never sets on the British Empire.' Why is that? Because Britain held and controlled territories around the earth. If the sun was setting on one part of their empire, it was rising on another part of their empire somewhere else. This saying shows how expansive the British Empire's influence, possessions, and power went. However, the Empire's decline began at the start of the 1900s as countries began to resist British domination and gain their independence. A dramatic fall in the scope of the Empire took place after World War II when many British colonies were granted independence. The return of Hong Kong to China is viewed as the defining end of the once great British Empire.

No one country has ever possessed the power and material blessings of the United States. From its victory for independence in 1783, the United States has grown in size, power, and material prosperity. Never known as a nation to colonize, the United States has been a benefactor to many nations around the world.

The United States has helped a lot of people with its material wealth and prosperity. Speaking on the historic economic scope of America, Sen. Cruz in his speech to the graduating class of 2013 at Hillsdale College said:

In the centuries before the American Revolution, the average human lived on between one and three dollars a day no matter whether one lived in Europe, Asia, Africa, or North or South America. But from that point on, from the beginning of the America experiment, for the first time in human history, per capita income in a few countries began to grow rapidly; and nowhere more so than in the United States. Over the last two centuries, U.S. growth rates have far outpaced growth rates throughout the world, producing per capita incomes about six times greater than the world average, and 50% higher than those in Europe. Put another way, the United States holds 4.5% of the world's population, and produces a staggering 22% of the world's output, a fraction that has remained stable for two decades despite growing competition from around the world.

Those percentages have been much higher than current percentages quoted by the Senator. Mr. Cruz continues:

This predominance of economic growth is not new. The late British economist, Angus Madison, observed that American per capita income was already highest in the world in the 1830s. This is a result of America's economic freedom, which enables entrepreneurs and small businesses to flourish.

Mr. Cruz's words provide insight into the scope of God's blessings on Ephraim and Manasseh. Britain became a great company of nations; the United States became a great nation. These blessings have been received as promised. Now those blessings are disappearing and disappearing quickly.

Remember, that Jacob had 12 sons. Many people believe today that the modern state of Israel represents the ancient Israelites. Put another way, they believe the Israel of the Bible refers only to the Jewish people. Judah, from whom the Jewish people descend, is only one of 12 sons that Jacob had; 1/12th of the ancient Israelites. To say that the ancient Israelites of the Bible are represented by the Jewish people today is not biblically accurate. In the world of religious scholarship, it is taught that the ten northern tribes of Israel are lost. The fact is, they are not lost. They are very much alive today, and play a major role in the world that we live in.

God's Word, the Holy Bible, shows the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Ephraim and Manasseh and the rest of Jacob's sons are alive on the earth today. Notice how the Apostle John points to their existence at the final six months of great tribulation as the 7 trumpets are about to sound.

Rev. 7:2 Then I saw another angel...[John says] ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to hurt the earth and the sea...[Referring to the first four trumpets] (vs 3) Saying, do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. (vs 4) And I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 of...[better translated 'out from'] all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed..

John shows there are 144,000 Israelites who are going to be protected from the impact of the trumpet plagues. They come out of a much larger group of Israelites still alive during great tribulation, who will have to suffer for failing to repent. Notice in verses 5-8, Jacob's twelve sons are listed. However, the tribe of Dan is not a part of this group. Ephraim is also not mentioned but is understood as the tribe of Joseph. Dan is not part of this list because of the tremendous amount of idolatry this tribe's descendants have embraced over the years. Revelation 7 shows the modern descendants of the Israelites are very much alive in the end times. The Bible proves the Bible scholars

are wrong.

Revelation 7 ties in with Jeremiah's words concerning the great tribulation in Jeremiah 30:4 *These are the words that the Eternal spoke concerning...[Notice] Israel and Judah. (vs 5) For thus says the Eternal, we have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, not of peace. (vs 6) Ask now and see whether a man is ever in labor with child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? (vs 7) Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it. It is the time of Jacob's trouble...*

In verse 4, Israel refers primarily to Ephraim and Manasseh. Judah refers to the modern descendants of Judah today. This can be better understood knowing that Ephraim refers to Britain, Manasseh the United States of America and Judah as the modern state of Israel. But in verse 7, when it mentions the time of Jacob's trouble, it is referring to all the descendants of the sons of Jacob.

(vs 7) Alas for that day is great so that none is like it...[This is pointing to an event that has never before occurred in the course of human history. This is the same terminology Christ uses to describe great tribulation in Matt. 24:21. The last part of verse 7 is very encouraging because it says –] But he...[Referring to all the descendants of Jacob] shall be saved out of it.

Notice how this saving takes place. Jer. 31:7 *For thus says the Eternal, sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: proclaim, give praise, and say, oh Eternal, save your people, the remnant of Israel. (vs 8) Behold, I will bring them from the North country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and the one who labors with child together: a great throng shall return there. (vs 9) They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them: and I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, in which they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.* This is why he received the blessing from Jacob. This is Israel's deliverance following the return of Jesus Christ. From other passages, the Bible shows how the Israelites are going to be brought back from captivity around the world, to the land of Canaan.

Earlier in this study a connection between obedience to God and blessings, and disobedience to God and curses was made. People disregard this connection to their own hurt. Moses makes this strong connection in Deuteronomy 28. Read it here in your Bible.

Deut. 28:15 *But it shall come to pass, if...[IF – It's conditional upon a person's conduct, and behavior] if you do not obey the voice of the Eternal your God, to observe carefully all his commandments and his statutes which I command*

you today; that all these curses will come upon you, and overtake you. It is interesting there are many more curses, than there are blessings in this chapter.

In Deut. 28:68 notice what God says about one of these curses. *And the Eternal will take you back to Egypt in ships...*

In other words, the modern descendants of the ancient Israelites are going back to the country where God delivered their ancient ancestors from. Egypt is about to break loose into chaos, if it's not already there (2013). If they will kill their own people the way they're killing their own people, how does one think they're going to treat modern Israelites who show when show up on their streets as captives? It won't be very good.

Notice this prophecy given by Moses as the reason for why modern Israel will return back to Egypt. Deut. 31:28 *Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing. I call heaven and earth to witness against them. (vs 29) For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you...[When?] in the latter days;... [Why] because you do evil in the sight of the Eternal to provoke him to anger through the works of your hands.*

Many of the modern nations of Israel, have fully embraced homosexuality, abortion, and every other perversion that one can think of. They're doing the very things God said not to do and teaching others to do the same.

Knowing who Israel is, both anciently and today, is critical for understanding God's plan and the purpose He is working out here on the earth. This information, surprisingly, had been lost by God's Church. It has now been restored and must be held fast to. God expects His Church to use it to further understand the end-time events soon to unfold in the near future.

As is always done in this series of studies, it is important to look at what a topic is not. Concerning the identity of Israel from the catechism of the Catholic Church, it says:

Sections 6263 and 6264. It begins this way:

After the patriarchs, God formed Israel as his people by freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He established with them the covenant of Mount Sinai, and through Moses gave them his laws so they would recognize him, and serve him as the one living and true God, the Provident Father, and just Judge; so they would look for the promised Savior. Israel is the priestly people of God, called by the name of the Lord, and the first to hear the word of God, the people of elder brethren in the faith of

Abraham. Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts. The prophets proclaimed a radical redemption of the people of God, purification from all their infidelities, a salvation which will include all the nations. Above all, the poor and humble of the Lord will bear this hope. Such holy women as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Miriam, Debra, Hannah, Judith, and Esther kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation. The purest figure among them is Mary.

Section 218 of the catechism says the following concerning Israel:

In the course of its history, Israel was able to discover that God had only one reason to reveal himself to them, a single motive for choosing them from among all peoples as his special possession – his sheer gratuitous love. (That was his one reason, his one motive.) and thanks to the prophets, Israel understood that it was again out of love that God never stopped saving them in pardoning their unfaithfulness and sins.

Clearly, from their own words, the Catholic Church doesn't understand the significance of Israel or God's purpose for them. Even though God did work through Sarah, and Rebekah, and Rachel, it was through their husbands that He made the promises. It was through their husbands He proved and tested their loyalty to Him. Frankly, the wives, worked against their husbands at times. Always keep in mind what the Bible says when looking at any biblical topic.

Let's understand how the Church of God, in recent times, has rejected the restored knowledge of Israel. From a message to field ministers by Joseph Tkach Jr. August 10, 1992:

I would not preach on the topic of Israel in end-time prophecy. All it will do is generate more questions and possibly more confusion. To directly answer your question, I would not stick my neck out at all on it. When you stop and consider the significance of Acts 4:12 (quoted partly) "*neither is there salvation in any other*" (Referring to the name of Jesus Christ.) "*for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*", the teaching of US and BC has no significance. The national identity is of no consequence given Christ's sacrifice. In light of the New Testament, and the centrality of Christ in God's plan of salvation, as mentioned above, much of the relevance of our teaching on US and BC is reduced to 'so what?' All our traditional proofs are based upon folklore, legend, myth, and superstition.

Joe Tkach Jr. reveals his lack of understanding the importance of Israel by stating:

It is not possible to say that this was revealed to Mr. Armstrong.

From a Personal Correspondence Dept. letter to a WCG member written by David Hunsberger, dated July 22, 1993. Mr. Hunsberger says concerning the United States and Britain:

We have removed the United States and Britain in Prophecy from circulation because of several problems. The Church has never addressed the fact that many of the covenants and promises in the Old Testament were fulfilled. Additionally, we have never addressed how these promises should be understood with respect to the sacrifice of Christ.

Finally in a Q&A section of the Plain Truth dated November/December 1992, the following is said concerning the identity of Israel:

It is also interesting to study why these genealogies were included in the gospel. Matthew showed that the ultimate purpose of Israel's history, including the lives of its most famous people, was to accomplish the birth of Christ. Jesus Christ fulfilled the major purpose of the national identity of Israel.

Mr. Armstrong would vehemently disagree with the above statements. He had a much different explanation about the restored knowledge of the identity of Israel when he said in his sermon, *Mission of the Philadelphia Church Era*, dated December 17, 1983:

Another thing restored to us is our roots, our identity, who we are. We, referring to those in the United States, are the tribe of Manasseh, of the lost ten tribes of Israel. No other church on earth knows it. That knowledge has been restored into this Church, and God restored that to me 53 years ago.

It is important for to understand that this knowledge has been restored into God's Church. That's what makes it so significant. That's what Mr. Armstrong presented to the leaders of the Sardis Era who admitted it was right, but they wouldn't teach it.

Sen. Cruz and Rush Limbaugh are right. Who America is, is in our DNA. If only they knew why they were so correct.