

The 10 Lost Tribes of Israel Part 4

That was quite a video, wasn't it? Very eye-opening. If you didn't see it I suggest that you do before proceeding with this part 4 of our 10 Lost Tribes of Israel series. And by the way, it is called "Quest for the Lost Tribes" and it is available at HolylandMarketplace.com. It is important, I think, to add it to your library and show it to your family and friends.

We can summarize what we saw by saying that you and I have a choice to make: we can either come to the realization that remnants, large ones in some cases, of the 10 lost tribes are alive and well; or we can deceive ourselves and believe that there are millions of actors and pretenders, located in various remote areas of the Asian Continent, who put on a great show for the camera and have gone to great length to put one over on their neighbors for century after centuries.

If your choice is like mine, to face the undeniable facts that we did indeed see the remnants from most, if not all, of the 10 lost tribes, then our vocabulary is going to have to change, isn't it? Because, if those 10 Israelite tribes were ever really "lost" in the first place, they're sure NOT lost any more!

Of course, what we must now deal with is that we also know that an even bigger part of Ephraim-Israel apparently became so mixed with gentiles that they have forgotten or lost their memory of their Hebrew heritage. In the Prophets, God says they were "swallowed up" by the gentile peoples, and that they became a **lo-ammi**, a non-people no longer representative of the chosen Hebrew race. It seems that for every question the Lost Tribes video answered, it generated several more. So, how are we to deal with this modern-day reality of biblical prophecy come to life? Should we do with the 10 tribes what the 1600-year-old Constantinian Church...that is, the gentiles-only Church that began with Constantine in the 4th century, but has little resemblance to the Hebrew faith that Yeshua taught... has generally done regarding Israel? Which is to ignore it or demonize it or to mischaracterize it and all that its re-emergence as a modern nation means and portends? I don't think so. Since we can't "un-know" what we now know, what we must deal with is: what does the reemergence of the 10 tribes in the 21st century mean to us? How is it relevant to biblical prophecies? Is

our future, or even our present, actually affected by all that we've seen and learned about the 10 lost tribes of Israel?

The first thing I'd like to address with you is that we should probably stop calling these 10 tribes, **the lost** tribes. These people are the living and actual remnants of the 10 tribes of Ephraim-Israel. So, let's call them what they are: Ephraim. And as you have learned, to call them Ephraim is not rhetorical license; it is biblical and historical fact. Further to call them Ephraim is not to disconnect them, or deny them, their Hebrew heritage. Nor is it to suggest that they have been replaced by the gentile church.

Today there is a rather large debate raging about just WHO Ephraim is; that is, of people living today, who represents Ephraim? And whether the remnants of Ephraim are ONLY the people like those we saw in the video...those who have miraculously retained their tribal identities against all odds... or whether the remnant of Ephraim is all mixed in with the gentile world and have become gentiles ,or, as is my point of view that some degree of BOTH of these outcomes are true simultaneously, giving Ephraim a **dual** nature as it is today. Well, we now have a much better idea of just WHO Ephraim is and I don't think we can ignore what we now know. But just as important as who Ephraim **is**, is who Ephraim is NOT.

Let's go back to the first lesson. In that lesson we learned that after King David ruled and was then followed by his son Solomon; and upon Solomon's death the sovereign, the powerful, nation of Israel fell into civil war and became a divided nation. Ultimately it divided into two kingdoms. The northernmost kingdom was at first called Israel but then soon called Ephraim, and it was initially ruled by Jeroboam (who was of the tribe of Ephraim, of course). The southernmost kingdom was called Judah, and it was ruled by Rehoboam (naturally, of the tribe of Judah). Jeroboam was from the specific tribe of Ephraim, because the tribe of Ephraim was the dominant tribe, and therefore the RULING TRIBE, of the northern kingdom, which is also WHY the northern kingdom came to be called Ephraim. So, Ephraim ruled over, and all but absorbed 9 other Israelite tribes. Judah was the dominant tribe in the south, and therefore the ruling tribe, and therefore it was called Judah. The kingdom of Judah was made up primarily of two tribes: Judah and Benjamin.

The Bible likes to refer to the condition of Israel at that time as being that of a divided family... or in more Middle Eastern terms, a divided house. Biblically the terms "house" and "family" mean approximately the same thing. So, the House of Judah, together with the House of Ephraim, made up the Whole House of Israel just like in our American Civil War where the confederacy of the south, along with the union of the north, together made up the whole of America. These terms are important for us to understand because they are used profusely throughout Bible prophecy. And since all Bible prophecy, except end-times prophecy, has **already** come to pass, it would be well for us to grasp their meaning for much End Times prophesy appears to be beginning to be played out right before our eyes, even though too many Believers are unaware of it or in denial.

The interesting people in the video that we saw represented ONLY the House of Ephraim...those 10 tribes associated with Ephraim. The House of Judah was not dealt with because they are not a mystery. The House of Judah is the Jewish people that we are so familiar with. The Jews, the House of Judah, are those who currently populate the re-born nation of Israel as it exists today. So, the answer to my question of "who Ephraim is **NOT**" is... they are not Jews. The Jewish people are **not** part of the House of Ephraim. They are separate...distinct. In fact, you witnessed one man in particular from a tribe near India, emphatically state "we are NOT Jews, we are Israel (or better, Ephraim)".

It's key to also understand that in the vernacular of today's world, Jew, Hebrew, and Israelite are spoken of as synonymous terms; however, that view is neither intellectually honest nor biblically accurate. Believers need to modify our vocabulary to reflect that Jews represent only a PART of Israel...generally speaking, only 2 of the original 12 tribes. But be prepared for a battle because it's not just the Church that has difficulty with this truth; most modern Jews refuse to acknowledge that this is the case as well. Their Tradition, since Babylon, has been built on the premise that the Jews represent ALL that is left of Israel and they have gone to great length to twist and stretch every scripture passage that plainly speaks of the two separate houses of Israel that had 2 separate destinies and 2 separate journeys. The typical reaction of a Jew to the two houses of Israel reality is denial or even anger. But as you saw in that video some Jews HAVE

come to the realization that a Jew is NOT the sole representative of all 12 tribes, but rather they are merely representative of 2 of the 12.

With all you've now learned as a background, let's go to the place in the Bible that deals with this "2 houses of Israel" concept, Ephraim and Judah, head on. In it we're going to begin to drink in the explosive significance all of this has for us, especially in our time.

Let's take our Bibles and turn to Ezekiel 37.

READ EZEKIAL 37 all

There it is: the House of Ephraim is going to be rejoined with the House of Judah, a promise first made by the prophet Hosea. Israel, which became a divided house after King Solomon died, and then 2700 years ago were assimilated into the 120 nations of the Assyrian Empire, are going to be reconstituted as a single house. Of course, this brings up a lot of interesting questions not the least of which is, HOW?

Before we delve into these passages let me set the context for you. The writer of Ezekiel is Ezekiel himself. Ezekiel was a prophet of God who lived during the time that Judah, the southern kingdom, was being conquered by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, about 597 BC. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and also of Daniel.

It was at a much earlier time that Assyria had conquered the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim-Israel in 722 BC. Whatever fate befell the 10 tribes of Ephraim-Israel (which, of course, is the crux of what we are investigating) therefore occurred about 130 years BEFORE the time of Ezekiel arrived. The 10 tribes of Ephraim-Israel were long gone by the time of Ezekiel, and all that visibly remained of the Israelites was Judah (that southern kingdom that now consisted of only 2 tribes, Judah and Benjamin).

As with all world empires Assyria began a steady decline. By 612 BC a new world power named Babylonia conquered the Assyrians and took over their empire.

The era of the Assyrian Empire ended and the era of the Babylonian Empire began in that year.

But there was another nation that hoped to gain from the power struggle between Assyria and Babylon: Egypt. During the time that Babylon was conquering Assyria, Egypt gained control over Judah. Even though Judah had an Israelite king, he had sworn allegiance to Egypt in order to get the job. When Babylon crushed the Egyptian army the king of Judah quickly switched his allegiance to Babylon. But later he would rebel. The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, sent an army to the capital of Judah, Jerusalem, and conquered the city and the nation. Several waves of prisoners (over a few years period) were hauled off to Babylon; and among them was the prophet Ezekiel. The holy city of Jerusalem was eventually reduced to rubble and the land itself went into a steep decline.

So as regards the timing of the events spoken of in Ezekiel chapter 37... the reuniting of Ephraim and Judah... we know that the prophetic utterances of Ezekiel **are meant for** a period that can only be AFTER the conquering of Judah by Babylon and then their return, right? That's not too tough to figure out because whatever happens it has to happen after Judah is back in the land. And since we know in retrospect that Ephraim (the 10 lost tribes) did not come back when Judah returned, then it has to be referring to an even later time. Let's look at a few milestones that pretty well nail down WHEN this reunion of Judah and Ephraim of Ezekiel 37 is supposed to occur.

- 1) It has to be AFTER a time when ALL of Israel, all 12 tribes, have been scattered among the nations, because the prophecy says that it's from among the nations of the world that ALL the tribes will be returned. And, it has to be an exile that has gone on for so long that the Israelites have given up hope of ever returning. The symbolism of the dry bones is that all hope of the Israelites of ever returning is gone. And, we know this event of Ezekiel 37 is speaking of all 12 tribes, and NOT just the 2 tribes that form Judah, because of vs. 11, which explains the bones are those of the WHOLE house of Israel...both houses...both Judah AND Ephraim.

^{CJB} Ezekiel 37:11 *Then he said to me, "Human being! These bones are the whole house of Isra'el; and they are saying, 'Our bones have dried up, our hope is gone, and we are completely cut off.'*

Judah was NOT scattered by Babylon, they remained as a coherent community of Jews in exile.

- 2) Even more this amazing reunion has to occur AFTER at least some of the Israelites have returned to a reborn and established nation of Israel. Look at vs. 12.

^{CJB} Ezekiel 37:12 *Therefore prophesy; say to them that Adonai ELOHIM says, 'My people! I will open your graves and make you get up out of your graves, and I will bring you into the land of Isra'el.'*

The land is CALLED Israel before this reunion occurs.

Let's now look at the era when the Israelites actually returned to their homeland from a condition of exile. About 70 years after Judah was taken captive by Babylon the Jews were allowed to return to their homeland. The Persians had defeated the Babylonian Empire and now the Persians (modern day Iran) were the new world power. It was the Persian kings Cyrus and later Darius that sought to right the wrongs Babylon had done, and so he decreed that the Jews could return home and rebuild Jerusalem and their Temple. Could this have been when the events of Ezekiel 37 were supposed to occur?

No. First, Judah was never scattered among the nations by Babylon. They were taken intact as a community of Jews, to Babylon. It was very similar to when Israel was in Egypt. They stayed together as a community, retained their Jewish identity, continued worshipping their God and there was no direct attempt by Babylon to assimilate them. They were exiled in Babylon, gone from Judah, for a relatively small amount of time: a mere 70 years. And despite being understandably depressed about their situation they had not at all become "dry bones" that had lost all hope. They were actually treated quite well in Babylon, much better than their ancestors had experienced in Egypt. Thousands of Jews who were children or very young adults in Judah when Judah fell, lived in Babylon

for those 70 years, and were part of those who returned. These people did NOT forget about Judah, because Ezekiel specifically told them that this would not be a particularly long exile. Second, it was ONLY the house of Judah that had been hauled off to Babylon, and ONLY the house of Judah that returned. Why is that? Because the OTHER house of Israel, Ephraim, had long ago been scattered by Assyria and didn't have that same opportunity to return (although the evidence is that some did manage a way to do so).

Now if that is not enough to convince you, look again at Ezekiel 37 vss. 24 and 25.

^{CJB} Ezekiel 37:24-25 ²⁴ My servant David will be king over them, and all of them will have one shepherd; they will live by my rulings and keep and observe my regulations. ²⁵ They will live in the land I gave to Ya'akov my servant, where your ancestors lived; they will live there- they, their children, and their grandchildren, forever; and David my servant will be their leader forever.

When the term "David" is used, it obviously does NOT mean the actual king David that we are all aware of. It means, at the very least, a descendant from the line of David. How can I be absolutely certain of that? Because David had been dead for over 400 years by the time of Ezekiel!! The time of David was long before Ezekiel, before the conquering of Ephraim by Assyria, or the exile of Judah to Babylon. And notice it says that the king who will rule over the "Whole house of Israel", the reunited Judah and Ephraim, will be ONE king, a prince, and his reign will be...for HOW long? FOREVER!! Jewish scholars, as have their Christian counterparts, always understood this reference to a "king forever" to be speaking about the Messiah. But even more, "forever" means that once Israel is reunited they will never again be exiled from their land.

Some scholars speculate, with good reason I might add, that it is possible (if not likely) that a few handfuls of the Ephraimite tribes that had held on to their identities joined up with their Jewish brethren when the Jews were released to go home from their exile in Babylon. In fact, the Book of Ezra gives some family and clan names that MIGHT (and I underline MIGHT) be associated with the 10 lost tribes. In other words, some of those members of the various Israelite tribes of Ephraim, after they had been scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire,

refused to give up their identities; they didn't share so many of their fellow Ephraimites' desires to give up and join the gentiles of the world. When the Jews were officially released to go back to Judah from Babylon, the news would have traveled rapidly throughout the Middle East. Many of these Ephraimite tribal members, who were living in gentile lands, undoubtedly longed to once again live on Israelite soil. So, when they heard of the large group of Jews (Judahites)...around 40,000 men...heading back to Judah from Babylon to reconstitute an Israelite nation, they joined them and apparently were welcomed. However, as the Scriptures attest, the place they went back to was now called Yehud, a Persian Province...but the former Judah... and we don't read in the Bible of people calling themselves anything other than Judeans (Jews). That means whomever of the 10 tribes who MIGHT have joined the Jews going home to Judah, melded into the tribe of Judah and generally gave up their former tribal identity.

Understand that there has ALWAYS been some mixing of the 12 tribes among one another, and with gentiles also mixing with the Hebrews, since the time of Abraham. But the thing that makes it a certainty that the return from Babylon to Judah was NOT the reunion spoken of in Ezekiel 37 is that within 500 years of Judah's return from Babylon, Israel was exiled AGAIN from the land (this is the Roman dispersion when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D.). The events of Ezekiel 37 result in a permanent situation. The reunion of Ezekiel 37 will not be undone because we're told that after the reunion, they will be under one king...FOREVER. Forever means forever. So, we can strike the return of Judah from Babylon as a possibility that it was that event when the Ezekiel 37 reunion of the two sticks (the 2 houses of Israel) occurred.

Is there another and later historical event that could even remotely be construed as the reuniting of Ephraim and Judah? Let's fast forward about 500 years to the time of Christ. One of the most studied historians, proven reliable for the most part, is Josephus. Although he is called the Roman historian Josephus in fact he was a Jew; his birth name was Joseph Ben Mattathias. Joseph was a commander of Jewish rebels who were fighting against the Romans in the Galilee region. When his army was captured Joseph declared allegiance to Rome to save his own skin and changed his name to Josephus; he lived during and following the time of Yeshua. He was an eyewitness to the fall of Jerusalem to Rome. He was there; he was involved in the war (albeit as a Roman, and not a Jew). Now listen to what

Josephus says in his famous work "Antiquities" about what the common knowledge of that time was concerning Israel...or as we now know to call it, Ephraim.

Josephus says: "**Whereas there are but TWO tribes (of Israel) in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans (meaning Judah and Benjamin), the TEN tribes are still beyond the Euphrates 'till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers (11.133).**"

The two tribes...the house of Judah; the 10 tribes, the house of Ephraim. The two tribes under Roman rule in Asia and Europe (Palestine was considered to be in Asia)...are, of course, the Jews. The 10 tribes were still beyond the Euphrates in Christ's day and commonly known to be a vast multitude, but with no way to even estimate it. Remember, Josephus wrote this down sometime around the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the subsequent dispersal of the Jewish people by the Romans. So, let's be clear: when the Roman dispersal of the Jewish people occurred, it was INDEED a scattering of the Jewish people to all nations. This was an entirely different kind of exile than what happened when the Jews of Judah were taken to Babylon, because in the Babylonian exile the Jews were sent intact, to one place, and they generally stayed together and continued in a common Jewish culture.

It becomes self-evident that the reuniting of Judah and Ephraim still hadn't happened by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome, in 70 AD. And certainly, there is NO mention of such an event in the New Testament, which was completed within about 25 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jewish people. In other words, as of the close of the Bible as we know it today, no reunion of Ephraim and Judah had yet occurred. Historically, in events recorded outside the Bible, there also is no mention of such a reunion.

So **now** where or better WHEN, should we look for this critical reunion to happen?

CJB Ezekiel 37:26-28 ²⁶ I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. I will give to them, increase their numbers, and set my sanctuary among them forever. ²⁷ My home will be with them; I will be their God,

and they will be my people. 28 The nations will know that I am ADONAI, who sets Isra'el apart as holy, when my sanctuary is with them forever.'"

This is of course an obvious reference to when Messiah is reigning; reigning from Jerusalem because this is a "forever" event. So, what we can know is this: the coming back together of Judah and Ephraim...all 12 tribes of Israel... was, as of the turn to the 21st century, still future to us; it had not happened yet. Even in Jesus' time, as we heard Josephus tell us, the 10 tribes were STILL all beyond the Euphrates and too numerous to number. And when Israel was reborn as a nation in 1948, a necessary requirement to set the stage for the reunion, it was ONLY as a nation of Jews...the 2 tribes...the house of Judah. Judah returned to their homeland, Ephraim did not.

Ezekiel 37 is an end-times prophesy...it occurs in the latter days (and BTW, this is not controversial. Few Bible scholars...Jew or gentile... of any stature would argue with that conclusion). With that in mind, this event of Judah and Ephraim together representing all 12 tribes of Israel, the WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, being rejoined into a single nation under one King, must occur AFTER 1948 when Israel was re-born as a nation. Why?...because we're told they return and reunite in Israel, so Israel has to exist a real nation, and not just as a hope. Israel had to come back into being BEFORE this reunion could happen.

What does that mean for us? Well, particularly with what we saw happening in that "Quest for the Lost Tribes" video it probably means that we are currently living in that incredible slice of history when the reunion IS going to happen. The dominoes of prophesy have been falling fast since 1948, and the Ephraim domino is teetering precariously.

But what's the hold-up? Why hasn't Ephraim returned, en mass?

Let's review what we've learned so far. First and foremost, this reunion is problematic because the vast bulk of the tribes of Ephraim have mixed their genes and/or their cultures with the gentile peoples, and have either lost their identity or hidden it for centuries. Somehow they have to realize their connection to Ephraim, and to the reborn State of Israel, and then when they do they have

to determine if they want to leave their centuries old homes and cultures and come to modern day Israel to live.

I believe I have demonstrated to you that while **most** of Ephraim assimilated into the gentile world, **some** of Ephraim didn't, retained their identities, and have been waiting for the right moment to trek back home. The video you saw last week documented that several large groups, tribes of people in various locations throughout Asia, have retained their Israelite identity. So, what we see emerging is that just as the Whole House of Israel has a dual nature (that is, it's composed of the House of Judah AND the House of Ephraim), Ephraim, too, has its OWN **dual nature**: some of Ephraim has assimilated into the gentile world while another part has determined to retain their Ephraim-Israelite identity.

I see some of you squirming a little bit when I mention this "dual nature" concept. We really shouldn't have a problem with the concept of something or someone having two simultaneous natures. We see this characteristic repeatedly shown to us in the Holy Scriptures...we just haven't given it a name to identify it when we run across it. So, I picked something to call this characteristic: and it's "dual nature". Let me give you just a short list of examples of Biblical dual nature:

- 1) God: all merciful, and all just.
- 2) Christ's persona: Suffering Servant AND Warrior King
- 3) Christ's essence: 100% God and 100% Man
- 4) Followers of Messiah Yeshua: Gentile Believers AND Hebrew Believers
- 5) Mankind: Spirit and Flesh
- 6) The Universe: Material and immaterial (tangible and intangible)
- 7) The Spirit World: Good and Evil

I could go on and on, but you get the point. It is the nature of intellectualism to want to reduce all arguments to an either-or solution, or to a one-best-answer with all other possibilities discarded. God doesn't seem to buy into that concept. In fact, the Jewish religious leadership who attempted to define the nature and the characteristics of the coming Messiah eventually broke into 2 groups: those who saw Him as the Suffering Servant (whom they called Mashiach Ben Joseph) and those who saw him as the Warrior King (whom they call Mashiach Ben David). These great Jewish intellectuals battled wits for centuries, and still do to this day, over the exact nature of the Messiah. As it turns out these two groups were both

right and both wrong because the Messiah HAS come and what we Believers now know is that Jesus Christ, Yeshua, the ONE Messiah has a DUAL Nature. He's BOTH the suffering servant AND the Mighty Warrior King. The first nature was displayed when He died for our sins 2000 years ago and His second nature will be displayed when He comes again; this time to ruthlessly battle and defeat evil, and rule from His throne with a scepter of iron (indicating strength and firmness).

This concludes part 4 of The 10 Lost Tribes of Israel, and next week will be the finale and we'll wrap things up.