

### Where Is Israel Today?

In 718 BC, Sennacherib carried away the last of the captives of the nation of Israel out of their land into Assyria. In 585 BC, Nebuchadnezzar similarly carried away the last captives of the nation of Judah into Babylon.

Seventy years later, as prophesied by Jeremiah and understood by Daniel, the Babylonian captives of Judah returned home. But the captives from Israel, a much more populous nation, were never seen again. To all modern historians this nation of millions simply dropped from the face of the Earth. But not to God.

God spoke to this people in **Amos 9:9** saying, *“I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth”*. In **Ezekiel 11:16**, God says of this lost nation of Israel *“I have scattered them among the countries”*, but promises that when He returns *“I will ... gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered”* (**Ezekiel 20:41**).

Though these nations are “lost” to the world, **God knows exactly where they are**. And though they have been scattered through many nations, **not one grain – not a single Israelite person – has been lost from God’s view**. He KNOWS where the nation of Israel is today! And so will you – as soon as you study...

### LESSON 45: WHERE IS ISRAEL TODAY?

First, let’s clear up a basic misconception. **Jews and Israelites are not the same thing**. In fact, the very first time Jews are mentioned in the Bible is in **2 Kings 16:5-6**. And there, you see that Israel is AT WAR with the Jews! How did this happen? First, read **Genesis 35:22-26**.

There you see that Jacob the patriarch, son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham, had twelve sons by four women. These sons all had children and in time formed separate “tribes”, each one named for the father of the tribe; Reubenites, Simeonites, Levites, Judahites, etc.

Due to a strange set of events which we will study later, one of the sons, Joseph, was given a double inheritance; and so each of Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were each given “tribe” status equal to their uncles. Thus making thirteen tribes instead of twelve.

In time, “Judahite” was shortened to “Jew”, for obvious reasons. This nickname apparently became common usage around 750 BC. So you see, while all Jews would be Israelites, most Israelites are NOT Jews! Just like all Texans are Americans, but most Americans are not Texans. Texas is only one STATE of a much larger nation, and likewise the JEWS were just one tribe, with their own territory or “state” in the nation of Israel. At first.

## A UNITED NATION OF ISRAEL

Up until roughly 1100 BC, all Israelites, Jews included, were ruled by a system of judges and priests. But then they desired a king; so God gave them a king – Saul. All was well, until Saul rebelled against God. Then God took the kingdom away from him, and anointed David as king instead (**1 Samuel 8-16** talks about these events, but that's not really the point of today's lesson).

David was a great king, and greatly beloved by God, so God made David certain unconditional promises in **2 Samuel 7**, particularly **verses 12-16**. This meant David's dynasty was to be *perpetual*. And **even if David's children sinned, God would not utterly destroy his dynasty** as He did Saul's; David or one of his descendants was to sit on a throne ruling over the house of ISRAEL FOREVER without a single break!

I never use underlining in these lessons; but I would underline that twice if I could, because this is THAT IMPORTANT. **God swore an unbreakable oath to David, in the strongest language possible, that NO MATTER WHAT, one of David's descendants would ALWAYS be on the throne ruling over at least some of the tribes of Israel!** He confirmed this hundreds of years later in **Jeremiah 33:17**.

God's fears about the righteousness of David's children proved to be justified – read **1 Kings 11:1-13**. Though initially a good king, Solomon later in life served other gods. So God fulfilled His promise to David and took the kingdom away from Solomon – *but not totally!* God had made an unconditional promise to David that his heirs would ALWAYS reign over the house of Israel; at least, part of it. So God gave Solomon's descendants one tribe to fulfill this promise.

Meanwhile, God sought another man to give the rest of the tribes to; **1 Kings 11:26-40** tells of the prophecies God made to Jeroboam, an *Ephrathite* (which means he was of the tribe of Ephraim). He was to reign over ten tribes. But because DAVID obeyed God, and God had made him a promise, **God could not destroy David's throne**; it HAD to continue to exist!

## THE DIVISION OF A NATION

The prophecies had been given; it only remained to bring it to pass. When Solomon died, he made his son Rehoboam king. And because of the massive work of the temple and palace and so on, Solomon had levied heavy taxes on the nation. And before accepting Rehoboam as king, Israel wanted to make sure he would lower the tax burden (**1 Kings 11:43-12:4**). To make a long story short, Rehoboam listened to his friends rather than to the wise old men, refused their request, and ten tribes rebelled and followed their spokesman, Jeroboam, whom they later crowned their king (**verses 5-20**).

**Verses 21-24** add that in addition to Judah, Benjamin also followed Rehoboam; so when God said "I will give you *one* tribe", He meant *in addition* to the tribe of Judah. So now there is a clear division between the two "houses"; **what was once one nation had become two: Israel and Judah**.

Two separate nations were formed from one family; ten tribes became the "house of Israel", the northern kingdom under Jeroboam, whose capital was set up at Samaria. The other two tribes, Judah and Benjamin became the "house of Judah" – also imprecisely called "the Jews" – which was the southern kingdom ruled by Rehoboam, grandson of David.

**From this day forward, the phrase "house of Israel" ALWAYS and EXCLUSIVELY refers to these northern ten tribes ONLY, and NOT to the Jews.** The nations were separate now, as England

and the USA are separate; just because America was settled by English settlers and once ruled by the English kings does not mean that you can call Americans “British”!

Likewise, it is unscriptural to call the “Israel” of the Bible the Jews of today; or to call the Jews of the Bible the Israel of today. *Racially*, Jews are Israelites. But *nationally*, Jews are NOT Israelites. The Jews formed a SEPARATE country and **from that day forward were never again called Israel by the Bible!**

Nearly the whole world misses this obvious fact right there in scripture, and continues to confuse Jews and Israel in the Bible; continues to wrongly apply prophecies addressed to the “house of Israel”, to the Jews of our day; or carelessly assume that the “Jews” in the Bible refers to all the tribes of Israel, including the northern kingdom. **This is one of the major reasons no one understands the Bible!** Because you *cannot* understand Bible prophecy without *clearly* understanding the difference between the Israelite kingdom and the Jewish kingdom!

In the Bible, God ALWAYS uses the proper name for the separate kingdoms in prophecy. **This is a vital key, an absolutely ESSENTIAL key**, to understanding Bible prophecy, so I’m going to say it one more time: **“house of Israel” in Bible prophecy does not, EVER, refer to the Jews! Just like in a modern newspaper, the word “England” does not, EVER, refer to the USA!** Prophecies cannot be understood by most of the world because they don’t understand this!

You MUST underscore clearly in your mind that the modern state called “Israel” is *not* the “house of Israel” of Bible prophecy. The modern nation of Israel was founded by Jews, and **Jews have not been called “Israel” by God in THREE THOUSAND YEARS!**

You will see ample evidence in this lesson that proves beyond all question that Jews in no way fulfill the prophecies of Israel; you will see that God made clear and distinct promises to both Jews and Israelites. But as long as you try to lump them together, they will make no sense. You MUST clearly divide them in your mind.

Meanwhile, back to the story; prompted by a lack of faith in God’s promises, Jeroboam feared that having all his citizens returning to Jerusalem for the feasts three times a year would undermine his authority (**verses 25-27**). God had just given him, a commoner, an entire NATION to rule; surely God could see to it that he kept it! But this is how people reason when they don’t trust God.

So he tried to secure his kingdom by creating an alternate religion and moving Tabernacles from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> month (**verses 26-33**), replacing the Levitical priesthood (**1 Kings 12:31**) and driving out the Levites, who fled to Rehoboam (**2 Chronicles 11:13-14**). Thus giving David’s dynasty THREE tribes to rule – Jews, Benjamites, and Levites. God, even while punishing them, was generous for David’s sake and gave three tribes to David’s sons to rule!

Back to Jeroboam, God determined to destroy his dynasty because of his sins (**1 Kings 13:33-34, 14:7-14**). But what’s more, this is where God gave His first prophecy that the nation of Israel (*not* the Jews/Benjamites/Levites, but the **nation of ISRAEL!**) would be plucked out of their land and scattered “*beyond the river [Jordan]*” (**verse 15**). God kept trying for almost 300 years to get Israel to repent and repeatedly tried installing new kings, but there was never a single good king in the nation of Israel. So eventually He did scatter them among all nations, as He had threatened.

## A NATION LOST

Starting about 740 BC, three of the tribes of Israel were carried away captive by Assyria (**1 Chronicles 5:26**). At about the same time, another tribe was carried away (**2 Kings 15:29**). During the years 722-718 BC, the rest of the northern tribes (the last of the nation of Israel) were conquered and carried away as well. (**2 Kings 17:1-23** is a good summary of the events and God's reasons).

Following standard Assyrian policy of the day, the conquered nation of Israel was deported, and people from other conquered nations were imported into Israel in their place (**2 Kings 17:24**). This minimized nationalism and rebellions and made conquered populations easier to control. These imported nations also made Samaria their capital, and became known as Samaritans (**verse 29**).

Samaritans were Gentiles (**Matthew 10:5**). And though their legends had mingled their history with that of Israel (**John 4:6-12**), they were *not* Israelites, they were imported Gentiles from other parts of the Assyrian empire. The Israelites had been deported to many cities on the northern edge of the Assyrian empire, primarily between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea – roughly the region between modern Turkey and Turkmenistan. And that's it – history loses them there. But God didn't – and you'll see exactly who they are before we're done with this series of lessons.

The Jewish nation with the tribes that God gave it – Levi, Benjamin, and a few defectors out of the other tribes (**2 Chronicles 15:8-10, 2 Chronicles 30:1, 11-12, 18**) – continued to live around Jerusalem ruled by a Davidic king until their own sins got them sent into the Babylonian captivity between about 600-585 BC, where they stayed for many years, returning to the land of Judah – later called Judea – in several waves between 539-457 BC.

In **Jeremiah 3:6-11** God compares the nations of Israel and Judah to two sisters who were married to God, their King. Israel betrayed her husband and spiritually “slept” with other gods, so God divorced her and “put her away” – from the other scriptures, we know she was sent beyond Jordan into the Assyrian captivity. Later Judah, who had been more righteous at first, followed Israel's example until her sins surpassed those of Israel and she too was sold into captivity, this time to the Babylonians.

Later the Jews returned from Babylon. **But the Israelites didn't come back from this second captivity because they didn't go into it!** At the time of the Babylonian captivity (585 BC), the Israelites had been GONE for nearly 150 years, taken captive by a DIFFERENT nation in 718 BC!

**Only the JEWS went to Babylon, so only the JEWS could have come back from Babylon!** While the Jews were sinning and being sent into captivity, Israel had lost their identity in the Assyrian nation, lost their language and much of their customs and disappeared from view.

In the NT, almost 800 years after the Israelites went into captivity, where were they? **James 1:1**. Were these dispersed tribes mixed in with the Jews? **John 7:35**. So as God had promised, the Israelites were being “sifted among all nations”, mixed with the Gentiles, while the Jews retained their identity and returned from Babylon.

For the remainder of this lesson I will use the terms Israel and Judah as God does; to refer to two separate nations. When I say Israel, I mean the ten tribes that went with Jeroboam; when I say Judah or Jews, I mean the nation of Judah that included the tribes of Benjamin and Levi and a minor sprinkling of a few of the other tribes.

That said, there are two ways to find Israel today.

1. Although modern historians have no idea where they are, massive amounts of evidence exist to show exactly where those nations went after the fall of the Assyrian empire. Linguistic evidence, skull-shape evidence, traditional histories, the names they gave to places they traveled to, even modern DNA evidence all give powerful proof to who they are today. However, this is a Bible study course, so we won't get into any of that here. Well, not much anyway.
2. Or (and this is what we'll be doing), we can see how God described those tribes; see the prophecies He made about them and the promises He made to them; and see, among all the peoples of the Earth today, who alone can fit the prophecies and who has received the promises God made. Then we'll know.

The problem with #1 is that, although massive proof exists in published journals, all modern historians know that fostering an opinion that proves the Bible to be inspired is career suicide. Since our society is totally opposed to any proof of the Bible's veracity, they fight each point tooth and nail. And since I haven't had time to write any such historical proof that would stand up to such severe scrutiny, I will confine my comments to what cannot be argued – what God promised, and what has happened.

## GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

I have said before that the Bible is mostly about the story of one man and his children – Abraham. The first eleven chapters of the Bible bring us to Abraham; from then on, the rest of the Bible (over eleven *hundred* chapters) talks about nothing else *but* Abraham, Abraham's children, and Abraham's spiritual/adopted children through Christ. Other nations are mentioned only as they affect the children of Abraham.

Abraham was in line to inherit the blessings of Shem, the blessings which had been passed down through Arphaxad, Eber, Peleg and the others; but Abraham impressed God, because "*Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*" (**Romans 4:3**). And so God made Abraham many NEW promises which He had not made to his fathers.

We're going to study them in a moment, but first I want you to notice as you read them that most of these promises are *unconditional*. In any contract, there are always two sides; I build your house, you pay me. I give you a cow, you give me ten sheep. When we make a deal, once I perform my half you are BOUND to do your half.

So as you read these promises, look for both sides of the agreement; find Abraham's half, and God's half, and notice that in most of these cases, **Abraham had already fulfilled his side before God made the promise!** Thus making the promise UNCONDITIONAL. Abraham had nothing left to do but wait for it to happen!

Starting in **Genesis 15:1**, you can see God made Abram a spiritual promise; the promises of grace and salvation, as you learned in Lesson 11. But then He proceeded to make a PHYSICAL promise, one to be fulfilled *on* this Earth, not *after* it, in **verses 2-7**. God promised Abraham the land of Canaan, a son to inherit it from him, and descendants who would number "as the stars of heaven".

Later in **verse 18**, notice what God said; "*to your children I HAVE GIVEN this land*". It was done – God had made the contract. *It was finished!* God had ALREADY GIVEN it to them before they were even born!

In **Genesis 15**, they made a covenant of faith; God made the promises, and when “Abraham believed God”, **that was Abraham’s half. Only God’s half remained to be fulfilled.** But in **Genesis 17:2**, God makes a separate covenant, to be made not only with Abraham but with Abraham’s children as well; their half of the covenant is to “*walk before me, and be thou perfect*” (**Genesis 17:1**).

In **verses 4-6**, God changed his name from Abram, “*Exalted Father*” to Abraham, “*Father of a Multitude*”, because God HAD – notice the past tense – God HAD made him a father of MANY nations. When he was still childless, God already considered it DONE! Let’s summarize God’s promises to Abraham so far:

1. He would have children who numbered like the stars of heaven or grains of sand on a beach.
2. He would inherit the land of Canaan.
3. He would be the father of MANY nations. Not just the Jews! But *MANY* nations.
4. Some of his children would be **KINGS**.

God also changed his wife’s name from Sarai, “*My Princess*” (that is, the princess of one man, her husband) to Sarah, “*Princess of a Multitude*” (that is, nations shall call her a princess) [these translations are from *Bush, “Notes on Genesis”*].

## HELPING GOD

Though it isn’t the point of this lesson, I can’t let such a great opportunity pass without pointing out a very important piece of understanding. As you learned in Lesson 38, if you truly have faith in God, and if God has made a commitment to do something, no power in heaven or Earth will keep it from being fulfilled. You don’t need to “help” God to bring it about; you merely have to “seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness”, and wait for the promise to be kept. And repeatedly in this lesson, I will point out examples of where these great men foolishly tried to “help God” – and made their own lives much harder as a result.

The first case in point comes from **Genesis 16**. In a foolish effort to speed God’s plans along, Abraham had a son named Ishmael by his wife’s handmaid (at Sarah’s suggestion). This was a bad idea for several reasons, but chiefly because God HAD PROMISED that Abraham would have a son! The promise was *not* conditional; it was an unbreakable promise. Abraham only had to wait for it to happen – he was already married – but he wasn’t patient enough then.

So Abraham had a lot of domestic strife over this decision. It was a very troubled home for at least 15 years, likely much more. Certainly this served God’s purposes, but if Abraham had trusted God completely, as he did later in life, God could have done it in a way that would have been easier for Abraham to live through. His own meddling cost him – a lesson we could all learn from.

If God has promised you protection, you don’t need a gun. If He has promised you safety from a flood, you don’t need to build a boat – unless He told you to build one. If He has promised you a son, you don’t need to adopt, see a doctor, or find a surrogate. **You only have to wait.** God promised; God will come through. If you trust Him, the wait won’t matter to you. Because you’ll be CERTAIN He will do it, without you needing to do anything to “help” Him. You’ve done your part – now let Him do His.

I only mention this to remind you that God's greatest heroes were real men too, who had "like passions" as we do (**James 5:17**), and who sometimes lacked faith just like we do – but the thing is, they learned better and overcame those flaws. And you'll see more examples soon.

## ISAAC AND ISHMAEL

Meanwhile, back in **Genesis 17** God had made promises that were to be fulfilled in the as-yet-unborn Isaac, and Abraham – laughing at the idea that God would give him a son – begged God to give these blessings to Ishmael instead (**Genesis 17:17-18**). God refused, because He had plans for Isaac – but blessed Ishmael as well (**verses 19-21**).

So Ishmael was also to become a great nation, and be "multiplied exceedingly", but it was in ISAAC that the promises would be fulfilled. Later in **Genesis 21:9-13**, Sarah had Abraham kick Ishmael out of the house (more examples of that stressful home-life Abraham's lack of faith caused him!), and God told Abraham to do as she had said because Isaac was the son who would receive the promises.

Later, when Isaac had grown, God tested Abraham by telling him to sacrifice Isaac in a story I'm sure you know (**Genesis 22:1-14**). But what's important to us are the promises God made Abraham in **verses 15-19**. At this point, **Abraham had done his part!** God made these blessings "*because you HAVE done this thing*", and "*because you HAVE obeyed my voice*". Abraham didn't have to do anything else! This was a reward for services Abraham had ALREADY PERFORMED.

I stress this because it means that **Abraham's descendants didn't have to obey God to receive these blessings. Abraham had done the obeying already!** That will be important later. God swore by Himself – saying "so help Me, Me", I suppose – that Abraham would receive even more of all the earlier promises, and added two more:

5. Abraham's seed would possess the gates of their enemies.
6. Through Abraham's children, all nations would be blessed.

These gates are a very important key to identifying Abraham's seed today; a gate is something you enter or leave an area from; so the "gates of their enemies" can only mean important strategic passes; key ocean straits; and so on. We'll revisit these later.

After Sarah died, Abraham had children by concubines, but they received only "gifts" – the inheritance, and the possession of all these promises, stayed with Isaac (**Genesis 25:1-6**).

## MOTHER OF BILLIONS

It is commonly said that Abraham was the first Jew. This is simply wrong, since Abraham was not a Jew; **no Jew existed until four generations after Abraham!** For a Jew is a son of Judah, and Judah was Abraham's great-grandson! No, Abraham was a Hebrew (**Genesis 14:13**), a name which persisted long past the Exodus (**Exodus 10:3, 1 Samuel 4:6, Jonah 1:9** for instance). Hebrews were named for their ancestor Eber (**Genesis 10:21-25**).

Before Abraham died, he made sure that Isaac married another Hebrew, by sending his servant to his family in Haran to find Isaac a wife (**Genesis 24**). What we're interested in is what God inspired Rebekah's family to prophesy about her in **Genesis 24:58-60**. This adds another key promise:

7. Rebekah and Isaac's children would number in the *billions*.

The original language is a bit vague on the exact number, but the number is huge regardless. This number is certainly consistent with the number of grains of sand on the seashore. We can corroborate this “billions” number, however, with a separate blessing from Moses in **Deuteronomy 1:11**, where he says to all Israel “*May the Lord ... make you a thousand times greater in number than you are, and give you his blessing as he has said!*” (BBE).

Moses seemed to think that for God to “*give them his blessing as He has said*” – that is, according to the promises He had made Abraham – God would have to make them “*a thousand times greater in number*”. Now we know that 600,000 fighting men over the age of twenty left Egypt (**Numbers 1:45-46**). Since this was a list of warriors, it probably did not include those over sixty (**Leviticus 27:3**), since God apparently kept them counted separately elsewhere.

So if you double that, you have 1.2 million men and women between twenty and sixty. Add children and elderly to that, and you probably have nearly 2 million people leaving Egypt. Now if Moses wanted them to become “a thousand times greater in number”, that means Moses' blessing was for them to number TWO BILLION people! Just as Rebekah's family had blessed her! Surely the Jews have never in history numbered so many! Not even if you counted every Jew who ever lived!

## JACOB AND ESAU

God confirmed the same promises to Isaac personally in **Genesis 26:1-5, 24**, but God had already given specific prophecies that the inheritance was to be different for each of Isaac's twin sons Jacob and Esau in **Genesis 25:21-28**. In a way reminiscent of Ishmael and Isaac, God had decided before they were born that the promises He gave Abraham would be given to the younger son – Jacob (**Romans 9:7-13**).

Once again, this promise had been given; it was a done-deal. Jacob WOULD receive the promises. Nothing else needed to be done. It would just happen. But, just like with Abraham and Hagar, Jacob decided to “help” God fulfill His promises HIS way. So he cheated Esau, the eldest, out of his birthright – the right to inherit the promises of Abraham – in **Genesis 25:29-34**. Later, he lied to Isaac to get the blessing as well as the birthright in **Genesis 27:1-23**.

We'll go through the blessings in detail in a moment, but first I want to underline that **Jacob would have gotten this birthright and blessing sooner or later without having to resort to such underhanded tactics**. They already belonged to him by divine decree! So without any lying, cheating, and stealing, JACOB WOULD HAVE GOTTEN THE INHERITANCE OF ABRAHAM! God had promised, and it WOULD have happened somehow!

Perhaps Esau would have been killed; or perhaps Esau would have loved Jacob so much he just gave him the blessings. Or perhaps Isaac would have gotten angry with Esau and given it to Jacob. But SOMEHOW, had Jacob believed God, **he would have gotten the blessings HONORABLY**. As it was, however, he got the blessings underhandedly – and so he got trouble with them as well (**Genesis 47:9**). But if he had trusted God, he would have gotten the same things... but without his days being “few and evil” (**Proverbs 10:22, Proverbs 20:21**). Meanwhile, Isaac added a few blessings to what Abraham had been given:

8. A very fertile land, well watered, with “plenty of wheat and wine”. This means that they would be a major grain and food producer.



9. Other nations would “bow down” to Jacob’s descendants.

#9 included Jacob’s “mother’s other *sons*”. Rebekah only had one other son, Esau. But this is clearly a plural, her other *sons* would serve Jacob. We already know the other sons of Abraham by Keturah and Hagar were going to serve Isaac; so Jacob was now inheriting those blessings, thus those “brethren” – his cousins – were going to serve him. The unusual phrasing no doubt hides some deeper truth, but we’ll pass over that for now.

10. “Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee”.

This is always used to apply to the Jews alone, so modern religions fawn over the Jews hoping that by blessing the Jews, God will bless them. But this promise was given to Jacob, who was the Father of THIRTEEN TRIBES, only one of whom was a Jew! And the promise was first given to Abraham (**Genesis 12:3**), who was, again... not a Jew!

And while this blessing was shared to some extent among all the tribes, some received more of it than others. And it was *never* given specifically to the Jews, except as far as the Jews shared in the blessings of the entire nation.

## THE BLESSING AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

A key to understanding most of what will come after this, is the fact that the BLESSING and the BIRTHRIGHT are separate. Jacob had to get BOTH of them from Esau at separate times, because they are DIFFERENT THINGS. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all had them both – but soon, they are to split up, and I want you to be ready for it when it happens.

The first promise that God gave Abraham was in **Genesis 12:1-3**. This blessing is in two parts; that Abraham would be a great NATION – and that God would BLESS him. Later these blessings were expanded, but always in these two great parts; PHYSICAL wealth and offspring (a kingdom on Earth), and SPIRITUAL wealth and offspring (the kingdom of God).

The BIRTHRIGHT is the “right of birth” – the inheritance of physical blessings passed from father to son down through time. The things like the fat of the Earth and the billions of children and great possessions and so on are all a part of the birthright.

But the BLESSING is greater than that; for it is a spiritual blessing as well as a physical blessing, and it includes the promise of ruling over the other nations and that Abraham’s children would be kings, and that **in his seed all nations would be blessed**.

What does Paul say about the “Seed” of Abraham, in whom all nations would be blessed? **Galatians 3:14, 16**. So this “blessing” that would come upon all nations was Jesus; and since the saints will be Jesus’ brethren (**Romans 8:29**), whether we are literal sons of Abraham or not, we will receive the same BLESSING as Faithful Abraham! (**Galatians 3:9**). But that’s the blessing – *not* the birthright!

The birthright was the MATERIAL wealth of Abraham. This belonged only to the literal descendants of Abraham, as their right. But the spiritual wealth of Abraham, the inheritance God promised him when He said, “*I am your shield, and your exceeding GREAT reward*” (**Genesis 15:1**) – this is the BLESSING that, through Abraham, would come upon all nations when the “*blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ*” (**Galatians 3:14**).

Like most of God's promises, these promises are dual. Abraham's children were going to be physical kings, like David. The promise was specifically made to David that David's children – thus, Abraham's children – would NEVER not have a king on a throne somewhere ruling over Israel. Thus, IT STILL EXISTS TODAY!

But a higher type of that same promise is that Jesus is the "seed" of Abraham, who would be a spiritual king as well as a physical one; and when the King of Kings returns to rule the Earth, He will fulfill that promise as well. But an even further type is that when the saints are born into the kingdom of God, they shall also be **KINGS** and priests – thus, not just physical kings, or **ONE** spiritual King, was to come from Abraham's offspring, but **MANY KINGS**!

## JACOB TO ISRAEL

Many things happened to Jacob that we'll skip over for now. After returning to Canaan with wives and children and great possessions, Jacob was afraid of Esau (who, he figured, probably still hadn't forgotten about the theft of his birthright and blessing). So he prayed to God in **Genesis 32:9-12**. Jacob mentions the promises of Abraham, which Jacob had stolen but which he legally possessed now.

Later, probably sparked by Jacob's handsome prayer, Jacob met and wrestled with an angel in **verses 24-32**. This angel was later revealed to be God – and "God" in the OT means the Being we call Jesus today. The circumstances are odd, and it doesn't say how the fight started. Maybe God said Jacob talked funny. Maybe Jacob asked God what He was thinking when He created those silly-looking giraffes. Either way, someone threw a punch and they were at it.

But what's remarkable is that **Jacob wouldn't give up!** Despite being in a losing battle, and despite having God's power apparently destroy a muscle in his hip, Jacob held on to God! God apparently couldn't shake Jacob loose without resorting to unfair amounts of power. Besides, that would have been cheating. Jacob simply wasn't going to give up without getting a blessing from God!

Did you catch that? Jacob wanted A BLESSING (not the birthright!). He already HAD the blessing of Abraham and Isaac; but he wanted the blessing of God to confirm it! And so finally God gave it to him, by changing his name from Jacob "*supplanter*", to Israel "*he who beat God*". Then God blessed him (again, the blessing, the *spiritual blessing!*). And Jacob said "*I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved*".

You remember from Lesson 34 the difference between hearing God and SEEING God? Jacob SAW God, which is the SPIRITUAL covenant – and the SPIRITUAL blessing God promised to Abraham! Later, God confirmed the *birthright* to Jacob as well in **Genesis 35:10-13**. **Verse 11** allows us to add a new detail to the birthright...

11. Jacob's birthright would be divided into two parts; a NATION, and a COMPANY of nations.

## THE SONS OF JACOB

The birthright is physical. The blessing is spiritual. The birthright involves wealth and a large nation, the blessing involves kingship and seeing God and salvation. You will see this throughout all these promises, so fix it clearly in your mind.

All the sons of Jacob were "blessed" in **Genesis 49**. But THE blessing, the blessing of Abraham, only went to one of them. Jacob had twelve sons; the oldest was Reuben, who naturally should have

received both the birthright and the blessing. But what did Reuben do? **Genesis 35:22**. And so did Jacob give him the birthright or the blessing of Abraham? **Genesis 49:3-4**. Simeon and Levi were the second-born and third-born; did they get the birthright or blessing? **Genesis 49:5-7**. Why not? **Genesis 34:1-30**.

So now the blessing of the eldest must fall to the fourth-born, Judah; so read about it in **Genesis 49:8-12**. But did Jacob give Judah the BIRTHRIGHT, or only the BLESSING? Is there the promise of great wealth, innumerable offspring? Or only the promise of KINGS and leadership?

Also, pay close attention to **verse 10**. That means that the scepter – the symbol of kingship – shall not leave the house of Judah until Shiloh comes. Who is this Shiloh? In Hebrew, the name means “He whose it [the scepter] is”. Ezekiel mentions this in a verse we’ll come back to later in **Ezekiel 21:26-27**. And who does the scepter of Israel belong to? **Luke 1:32-33**.

So until Jesus comes – **and comes to be KING, which hasn’t happened yet** – there will be a lawgiver, a king, who is a descendant of Judah, ruling SOMEWHERE on this Earth! Jesus did not come to be a King last time He was here. This frustrated the disciples, who always wanted to know “will you at this time return the kingdom to Israel?” – and He always demurred.

But when He rides out of heaven on a white horse in **Revelation 19:11-16**, it will be as KING – coming to inherit the throne of DAVID – **which means when He returns, when SHILOH comes, that throne MUST STILL EXIST!**

Jesus isn’t coming to take over a nonexistent, dusty, worthless throne! But an ACTIVE, RULING POWER held by a literal descendant of King David of Judah! So somewhere on Earth, THIS VERY MINUTE, there is a son of Judah ruling over the house of Israel!

This incidentally ties directly in with the promise God made David; David was a descendant of Judah, so by fulfilling His promise to David, God is also fulfilling His promise to Judah. As long as one of David’s children is King, one of Judah’s children is also king – and by the same token, Abraham is also the father of kings! **Three separate promises to three separate people show that there must be a descendant of David on a throne ruling over Israel RIGHT NOW!**

## THE MONEY AND THE CROWN

Meanwhile, the rest of the sons of Jacob received decent blessings, but nothing outstanding. The details of these blessings will help us to track down these tribes today, but for now let’s skip down to Joseph in **Genesis 49:22-26**. Notice these are the promises God made Abraham **but only the physical promises!** Because Judah had already inherited the *blessing* of Abraham! **Judah now became “the father of kings”, in whose seed all nations would be blessed!**

Whom did God say inherited the birthright, and who inherited the blessing of rulership? **1 Chronicles 5:1-2**. The blessings and birthright of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which for three generations had been possessed by one man per generation, were now *divided* between two sons of Jacob. All of the sons received gifts and blessings, but THE blessing was given to Judah; and THE birthright was given to Joseph.

To make this absolutely clear, let’s suppose Jacob was a rich English Duke from a few centuries ago. When he died, Joseph inherited most of his money and Judah inherited his title. The other sons got a

few cool things, one got the summer house and one got the boat, one got his suit of armor and one got his horse, but the lion's share was divided between Joseph and Judah.

Jacob's "money" (birthright) and the "crown" (blessing) were divided between Joseph and Judah. If you look at all of the things God promised to Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, **either Judah or Joseph received every one of them!**

All the promises which Judah did not receive went to Joseph, and *vice versa*. Joseph was never promised that kings would come out of his loins, nor any spiritual blessing. Likewise Judah was never promised massive population or tremendous wealth. **Because Joseph inherited the physical birthright – wealth – and Judah inherited the crown, the spiritual blessing!**

All this will prove to be very important later. But first, there is a minor point to mention. God is not above His own laws, and God was behind all these blessings. And it appears that God jumped over a long line of older children (Gad, Naphtali, etc.), who had done no wrong, in order to give the birthright to Joseph, the eleventh born. This strictly contradicts God's own law in **Deuteronomy 21:15-17**.

Or does it? Joseph WAS the firstborn... of Rachel. Jacob had only two wives, and only sons of wives qualify to inherit the firstborn blessing; children by handmaidens and concubines are not considered part of the inheritance line. It was Rachel and Leah who built the house of Israel (**Ruth 4:11**). The concubines were not mentioned.

**Deuteronomy 21** forbids the firstborn of ONE wife, the favorite (in this case, Rachel), from being given a blessing over the firstborn of the OTHER wife, the hated, if that firstborn is HIS firstborn. In this case, the firstborn son of Leah **who had not disqualified himself from the blessing** was Judah. Therefore by law, he HAD to receive the greatest blessing, that "exceeding great reward" God promised Abraham (**Genesis 15:1**).

But the firstborn son of Rachel was Joseph. Jacob loved Joseph, and would have probably loved to give the whole thing to him – but he HAD to give the greater blessing to Judah, the spiritual blessing. The second-firstborn was Joseph, and he received the other half of the blessing, the physical half. This is not too important, but never forget that even in the most mundane details God keeps His own laws.

Now to compare, read the blessings of Moses upon the twelve tribes in **Deuteronomy 33**; the blessings are similar, but add new information. In **verse 7**, notice that God would HEAR the voice of Judah; that's a spiritual blessing, the answer to prayer. And once again Joseph's blessing is five times longer than any other tribe in **verses 13-17**.

Notice all the specific things Joseph would receive:

1. Well watered land.
2. A very fruitful and fertile land.
3. Precious things from "the ancient mountains", "the lasting hills", and "the earth". This is extensive and valuable deposits of minerals and metals and fossil fuels.
4. That his glory would be like a bull. Bulls are headstrong and powerful.
5. That Joseph was, and by implication will be, separate from his brothers (the other tribes).

## EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

But the birthright was further divided between the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. Remember God had told Jacob that the birthright would make him “A nation, and a company of nations”. Joseph then inherited that birthright, and it was divided between his two oldest children in **Genesis 48** – read the whole chapter to start.

There are many important keys to prophecy here. **Verse 5** tells us that Jacob had ADOPTED his grandsons and made them equal with their uncles; and that, in terms of the birthright, Ephraim and Manasseh had replaced Reuben and Simeon. So Joseph’s first and second born had replaced Jacob’s first and second born. Thus giving Joseph a double portion of the physical inheritance, by making each of his sons equal with Joseph’s brothers (**verse 22**).

But once again – notice, this is now the fourth generation in a row – the eldest child of Joseph did not receive the firstborn blessing! (**verses 13-20**). Manasseh was the elder but Jacob, blind but inspired by God, deliberately crossed his hands in order to give the better blessing to the younger son Ephraim.

**Verse 16** says that these two children were **to be called after the name of Israel**. As you see as you read through the history of the northern kingdom, called the house of *Israel*, Ephraim and Manasseh were so influential among the other tribes that God often used their names interchangeably with Israel in prophecy – just as Jacob prophesied here. (See for example **Jeremiah 31:9** and **Ezekiel 37:16** – both verses we’ll study at length in coming lessons).

In **Genesis 48:19** we see that as God had promised Jacob “a nation and a company of nations”, Jacob gave younger Ephraim the blessing of being “a multitude of nations”. Thus leaving Manasseh to be the “nation”, and setting Ephraim ahead of Manasseh (**verse 20**).

So now the promises of Abraham have been divided into three people; the scepter and the spiritual promises – the blessing of Abraham – went to Judah. The greatest material wealth, to be a company of nations, went to Ephraim. The lesser material wealth, but still incredible, went to Manasseh.

Later the tribe of Manasseh split in half and part lived on the other side of the Jordan with Gad and Reuben (**Numbers 32:1-5, 16-27**). Half of Manasseh dwelt in Gilead, and all four of the groups who inherited the promises of Abraham are mentioned in the same verse in **Psalms 108:8** – Manassites from Gilead, the other Manassites, Ephraimites, and Jews. These four groups inherited Abraham’s promises. The rest got, by comparison, crumbs.

Each of these promises needs to be followed through the Bible separately. It makes sense to start with the greatest promise, that given to Judah. So that will be the next lesson; I realize I haven’t answered the basic question of this lesson, “where is Israel today”. The full answer to that question will take several more lessons to answer. But we *will* get there.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The mission statement of the Bible is found in the oft-quoted (by me) **Genesis 1:26**. God is making man in His image, children who will bear His name and have a body like His ruling with Him. God gave this promise to Man when He promised that the woman’s seed would crush the serpent; when He accepted Abel’s sacrifice; when Enoch walked with God; when Noah was saved from the world by a flood.

These were all promises, and all direct traces of the inheritance of the world that God gave to Adam, when He gave him dominion over the Earth; Adam proved unworthy of that dominion over the Earth, but Abel did better; he was meek, and he will inherit the Earth that Adam could not inherit.

Apparently Seth was righteous, at least he was better than Cain (not much of a challenge) for he inherited the birthright and blessing of God. It passed from one generation to the next until the flood; then passed to Shem and on through his children down to Abraham, as we traced it in the last lesson.

In this lesson we have taken it four generations farther, to Abraham's great-grandchildren. Tracing the birthright and the blessing is the most important thing in the Bible, for everything God has ever done with mankind has been to further His initial goal of bringing many sons to glory; this birthright and blessing is HOW God is doing that.

There is scarcely a verse in the Bible that cannot be directly tied to this goal; and so we are going to trace it carefully, generation by generation, until you see who holds these blessings and birthrights today.

This will take time, but when it is done you will understand that the Bible is one big picture; this will be a unifying principle that ties all the seemingly random stories and principles in the Bible together and see that God has never strayed from the plan in **Genesis 1:26**.

And you will see that everything that has happened, every word that was written, was an essential part of giving His sons and daughters the divine inheritance of the divine nature – and thus qualifying them to rule the divine estate... that is, the universe.

*NOTES*

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold**; "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

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