

A Royal Nation

“The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

—Matthew 21:43

WITH one accord the inspired writers of the Bible testify that the “desire of all nations” for peace, security, and an abundant life of happiness, free from fear and suffering, is to be realized by the human race through the rulership of King Jesus. (Hag. 2:7) And we are assured that of the “increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,” that is, its sphere of influence will become universal and lasting, ultimately being accepted with rejoicing by all mankind.—Isa. 9:6, 7

Associated with many of the promises which tell of the blessings coming to the people under the rulership of this “King of kings” is the information that he will have “joint-heirs” to reign with him who will be chosen from among the human race and exalted to this high position of responsibility and honor because of their loyalty to God and to the high principles of righteousness set forth in his Word. (Rev. 19:16; Rom. 8:17) While some of God’s blessings are bestowed upon the just and the unjust alike, the high honor of being his servants in the working out of his plan is entrusted only to those who, through absolute loyalty to him, prove worthy thereof. The Scriptures are explicit in setting forth the fact that both individuals and nations which violate their covenants with God are no longer used by him for the purposes for which they were originally chosen.

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One of the original divine promises to “bless” all nations through a “seed,” or a nation specially chosen by God from among the people, was made to Abram. God said to him, “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 12:2, 3) Later God changed this patriarch’s name to Abraham—meaning that he was to be the father of many nations—and made a covenant with him which states, “And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”—Gen. 17:6-8

This covenant was later confirmed to Abraham by God’s oath. Following Abraham’s death it was reiterated to Isaac (Gen. 26:3, 4), and still later to Jacob. (Gen. 28:13, 14) On his deathbed Jacob blessed his twelve sons, but narrowed down to his son Judah that part of the Abrahamic promise which had to do with the blessing of many people. Concerning this he said, “Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”—Gen. 49: 9,10

Following the Exodus from Egypt, the great lawgiver Moses mediated a covenant between God and all the twelve tribes of Israel; and God made it plain that the fulfilment of his purpose to use them as a blessing nation of

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the remainder of the world was dependent upon their obedience to that Law. Concerning this we read, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."—Exod. 19:5, 6

In searching out from the Scriptures the promises of God to bless all the nations of the earth through the "seed" of Abraham, it is well to pause here and take serious note of that little word "if." God's promise to give Abraham and his natural posterity the land of Canaan as an "everlasting possession" seems irrevocable. So also is the prophecy that the sceptre would not depart from Judah until the coming of "Shiloh"—meaning tranquillity, rest, or peacemaker—and that then the gathering of the people would be unto him.

But whether or not all the twelve tribes of Israel would be associated with "Shiloh" as a "holy nation" and a "kingdom of priests" to be God's channel of blessing to the remainder of mankind is clearly made dependent upon their continued obedience to God's commandments and statutes. We are certain to be led to erroneous conclusions concerning the divine plan if we ignore this important fact in our study and understanding of the Word of God.

In order to emphasize this principle of dealing with men and nations, God gave a lesson to the Prophet Jeremiah by asking him to notice the practice of the potter. The prophet records his experience, saying, "Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of

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the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." —Jer. 18:3-10

There is no escaping the meaning of this lesson, which is that the promises to Israel concerning the high honor that nation was to occupy in God's plan to bless other nations was entirely dependent upon their obedience to him; and that he reserved the right to change his arrangements at any time he decided they did not meet the qualifications. It would be unthinkable to suppose that the Great God of the universe would deal otherwise with his creatures. But did Israel, under test, prove worthy of the exalted position God offered to these natural descendants of Abraham?

There were times when the nation, under the leadership of faithful judges and kings, served the true God sincerely and with a high degree of devotion; but on the whole the record of their national life is that of unfaithfulness and idolatry. One of the most shameful blots in the national history of this ancient people of God is the rebellion of ten of the tribes against Rehoboam, who became king following the death of Solomon. This rebellion was led by one named Jeroboam, who fled to Egypt during the reign of Solomon, but returned at the desire of the ten tribes to make him their king. This national calamity was permit-

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ted and foretold by the Lord as a punishment for the sins of the nation.

Despite this division of the kingdom, however, God indicated that he would be merciful toward these ten tribes, and would richly bless them provided they were faithful to him. To Jeroboam he said, "And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee."—I Kings 11:38

But with few exceptions the kings over this ten-tribe kingdom of Israel were unfaithful to their trust, and finally the Lord permitted the kingdom to be destroyed, and the people taken into captivity in Assyria. Concerning this we read, "And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes: **Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God** but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them."—II Kings 18:11, 12

It is important to note this record of the failure of the ten tribes to obey God's law, and that they had broken the covenant which had been enjoined upon them at the hands of Moses. If we compare this with Exodus 19:5, 6, already quoted, where the Lord said that he would make of this people a holy nation and a kingdom of priests "if" they did obey the Lord, it becomes certain that they failed to qualify, hence lost the conditional inheritance which had been promised to them.

Nor did the remaining two tribes—Judah and Benjamin—fare much better. They held together awhile as a

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kingdom following the overthrow of the ten-tribe kingdom, but finally they were taken into captivity in Babylon. Zedekiah was the last king of Judah—the two-tribe kingdom—and of him the Prophet Ezekiel declared, “And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. . . . **Remove the diadem, and take off the crown:** . . . it shall be no more, until he come whose **right it is**; and I will give **it him.**”—Ezek. 21:25, 26, 27

It should be noted that in this declaration which brought the kingdom of Judah to an end, the king is also referred to as a “prince of Israel.” This proves that as God viewed the matter it was the **right to rule**—the “sceptre”—which was originally promised to Israel, and later narrowed down to the tribe of Judah, which was involved in the overthrow of Zedekiah. This means that the ten tribes, in revolting against the king of all Israel and forming a separate kingdom of their own, alienated themselves from all association with this royal promise. Through faithfulness they could have recovered this favored relationship; but they were not faithful, and as a kingdom they perished forever. With the kingdom of Judah it was different only in point of time. The kingdom sceptre, **or right**, vested in this tribe was suspended with the beginning of the Babylonian captivity, and was to remain so “until he come whose right it is,” the prophet declared, and then it was to be given to him.

We believe that no one will question the fact that Jesus was the rightful heir of the kingdom of God which had been promised to Israel. He came to his own people and presented himself to them as their King, but they rejected him. Despite their long centuries of unfaithfulness, with only intermittent periods of halfhearted loyalty, they were still given the opportunity to be God’s kingdom nation in the earth, under the leadership of “Shiloh,” the promised “Lion of the tribe of Judah.”—Rev. 5:5

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But even in this final opportunity they failed, as is so clearly set forth in Jesus' own words just a few days before his crucifixion. Weeping over the city, he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."—Matt. 23:37, 38

Your "house" is left unto you desolate, said the Master. This is the language the ancients used to designate the **right to rulership** which they understood to be vested in a family or nation. By divine promise, Israel, through the tribe of Judah, had been given the hope of one day becoming the ruling nation of all the earth as the kingdom of the Lord. But this hope was conditional upon obedience, and they had not obeyed, and now had rejected the One who was to lead them to glory among the nations; so the Lord cast them off as his **ruling house**.

Even before this, Jesus had prophesied that such would be the case; for he had said that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to a nation "bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matt. 21:43) There is no mistaking the meaning of these words. The "kingdom" was to be taken from this nation and given to a nation which would bring forth the fruits of obedience required of those who were to be joint-heirs with Jesus and reign with him as kings and priests as the channel of blessing to all nations promised to father Abraham.

Right here it may be well to note and to correct a misunderstanding which prevails in the minds of many as to what is implied by this foretold transfer of the kingdom of God from the Jewish nation to another nation. It is er-

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roneously claimed by some that this refers to a transfer of the kingdom from the two tribes of Judah to the ten tribes of Israel. The claim is that it was the two-tribe kingdom of Judah which was responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, and that the ten tribes, still in captivity in Assyria, inherited the royal promises originally vested in the two-tribe kingdom of Judah.

For various reasons this is a mistaken viewpoint. We have already noted that the ten tribes, ruled originally by Jeroboam, could have established themselves as the ruling house had they obeyed the Law of God given through Moses, but they did not obey. They consistently and continuously disobeyed and finally were taken into captivity from which as a whole they never returned. These manifested every characteristic of idolatry and disobedience as seen in the other two tribes, and there is no reason to suppose that had the majority of them been in Judea at the time of our Lord, they would have acted any differently.

Certainly they did not prove their worthiness of the kingdom while in Assyria, and it should be obvious that God would not give the kingdom to those who had not proved worthy of it. Indeed, Jesus said that the kingdom was to be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, and certainly the ten tribes of Israel never did bring forth the fruits of righteousness which the Scriptures teach us to expect of those who will reign with Christ.

When God first made the promise to Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed, he made that covenant conditional upon the law of circumcision. (Gen. 17:9-14) If, as some claim, the ten tribes as a whole, after going into captivity in Assyria, gradually became identified as Gentiles, it means that they gave up the law of circumcision, and this, according to the original covenant with Abraham, would certainly

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disqualify them from being in any sense the kingdom nation of the Lord.

But it should be remembered also that according to the Scriptures God still recognized those who returned to Judea from the captivity in Babylon as Israelites. This was true for two reasons. First, Israel was the name given to Jacob, and the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin were just as much the children of Jacob, hence were just as much Israelites as were members of the ten tribes. The term Israel was given to the ten tribes merely to distinguish them from the other two.

Secondly, not all of the ten tribes joined in the rebellion against the kingship of Rehoboam. We read in I Kings 12: 17, "But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them." Undoubtedly these went into captivity in Babylon when the two-tribe kingdom fell in the days of Zedekiah, and their families would be among those which returned seventy years later when Cyrus issued the decree permitting them to do so. Representatives of all the tribes were therefore in Judea at the time of Jesus' first advent, and shared the guilt attached to the crucifixion.

Jesus said that he had been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet he confined his ministry to Palestine. He came to "his own," John tells us, "and his own received him not." (John 1:11) Wherever the majority of the ten tribes may have been at that time or since, it is clear that only those living in Judea and who still professed to be following the laws of Moses were considered by Jesus as "his own" to whom he came. When these rejected him, there were therefore no others to whom he could turn as a covenant people of God to offer them the kingdom privileges.

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To what nation, then, was the kingdom of God given when it was taken away from Israel? For the answer to this question we must depend upon the inspired teachings of the New Testament. First, it is well to note that although Israel as a nation rejected the Messiah and thereby was disqualified to be the kingdom nation, a few individuals of the nation did receive him and became his faithful disciples. Concerning this, John writes that Jesus “came unto his own, and his own received him not, But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”—John 1:11, 12

This is a most significant statement. The Apostle Paul explains that the sons of God of this age are his heirs, and that they are joint-heirs with Christ, “if so be that we suffer with him.” (Rom. 8:17) This indicates that God’s new ruling house is to be a house of sons over which his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, is the head. The mother of Zebedee’s children asked the Master if her sons might sit, one on his right hand and the other on his left hand in the kingdom. He replied to the effect that being associated with him in his kingdom implied the necessity of suffering and dying with him.—Matt. 20:20-23

Who, then, are these “sons” of God who will reign with Christ in his kingdom? It is clear, we think, that the nucleus of this company consists of those Israelites who lived in Judea at the time of our Lord’s first advent—those who received him, and to whom he gave authority to become the sons of God. But there were not sufficient of these to make up the foreordained number required, so we are told in Acts 15:14 that “God . . . did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.”

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Thus we find that Jewish and Gentile believers together constitute the kingdom class to be associated with Jesus in his kingdom reign. These comprise the “nation” to whom the kingdom rights were given when they were taken away from Israel. The Apostle Peter refers to these as a nation, saying, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; . . . which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God.” (I Pet. 2:9, 10) Here, then, undoubtedly is the “nation” to which the kingdom of God was given, not the ten “lost tribes,” as some would have us believe.

We can be absolutely sure of this, for it is the Apostle Peter’s inspired explanation of the matter. Jesus said, “Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? . . . Therefore I say unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” (Matt. 21:42, 43) Peter also quotes the prophecy concerning the stone which the builders rejected, and then follows with his explanation that “ye” are a “holy nation” made up of those who in times past were not a people, but who are “now the people of God.”—I Pet. 2:4-10

These sons of God, some of whom were originally natural Israelites and some Gentiles, are the real “seed” of Abraham through which all the families of the earth are to be blessed, rather than the ten lost tribes who departed from God and from the covenant they had made with him. Paul wrote, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:28, 29

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Here is a divinely inspired explanation as to who are heirs of the promise made to Abraham that his "seed" would bless all the families of the earth. In the next chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, the apostle makes the matter even more emphatic by explaining that the natural descendants of Abraham who came under the Law from Moses' day forward, are represented by Ishmael, the son of Abraham's bondmaid, who was rejected from being the heir to the promise made to Abraham; whereas, the faith seed of this Gospel age, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, are pictured by Isaac. "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise," Paul concludes.—Gal. 4:22-31

Those who wish to exalt the Anglo-Saxon race to a position of glory in the divine plan, claiming that they are the ten lost tribes of Israel who merit this favor because they did not crucify Jesus, lay great stress on the promise made to Abraham that he was to be the father of many nations. They speak of this as a family of nations, and apply it to the British Commonwealth of Nations. But in a few simple words of explanation the great Apostle Paul disposes of this fantastic claim. Arguing that the real seed of Abraham is developed upon the basis of faith in the promises (not by colonization through military might), the apostle writes:

"Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations), before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become

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the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.”—Rom. 4:16-18

This leaves no doubt as to how the promise that Abraham’s seed would be made up of many nations is fulfilled. And it is fitting that in this connection Paul reminds us of God’s power to raise the dead in order that his promises might be fulfilled. Some, in arguing that the ten lost tribes of Israel must be the Anglo-Saxon race, claim this race must yet rule the world, else the promises of God to Abraham will go unfulfilled. These fail to realize that God’s plan for human salvation is a long-range one which embraces the resurrection of the dead, hence that many of his promises will not be fulfilled until the dead are raised.

The promise made to Abraham was of two parts. First, there was to be the development of the “seed,” and then there was to be the blessing of all the families of the earth through that “seed.” We have noted Paul’s explanation of how the seed of blessing is made up from many nations; and the Scriptures also make plain that when this seed class is complete and reigning as God’s ruling house of sons, all nations of earth will be blessed through this Israelitish channel of divine grace.

In the outworking of this divine plan by which the royal promises of kingdom authority and glory are transferred from the natural descendants of Abraham to the seed which is of faith, the original name is maintained, for the seed is still of the “commonwealth of Israel.” Paul discusses this point in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Ephesians. Here he explains that Gentile believers who at one time were “afar off,” “being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,” are now “made nigh by the blood of Christ.” (Eph. 2:12, 13) This great truth, he explains, was a mystery which in previous ages had not been disclosed, but by special revela-

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tion God made it known unto him in order that he might reveal it unto the church.—Col. 1:25-29

And how essential it is that we give heed to this enlightening truth as to who constitutes the “commonwealth of Israel”—that it is not the British Commonwealth of Nations, but the faith “seed” of Abraham made up of believers from among the natural Israelites together with believers from among the Gentiles. And surely the great apostle did not err when referring to the “commonwealth of Israel” by not using the word Judah instead of Israel. Some today insist upon making this distinction, but it is not warranted by a single text in the New Testament, where the real intent of God through the promises of the Old Testament is made plain. To attempt an interpretation of the Old Testament by ignoring the explanations of the New is very unwise, and contrary to the Master’s words to heed the full counsel of God.—Matt. 4:4

A very clear-cut explanation of the manner in which Gentile believers inherit the promises made to Israel and thereby become spiritual Israelites is given us in the 11th chapter of Romans. The chapter opens with a question by Paul as to whether God has permanently cast away his people. He answers, “God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” Here is definite proof that the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin were Israelites as well as the ten tribes which rebelled under the leadership of Jeroboam. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, but because he was also a child of Abraham he declared himself to be an Israelite, and as an Israelite, God had richly blessed him with the opportunity of becoming a member of the faith seed of promise. He argues that in the development of this true “seed” through which the blessing of all nations was actually to come, God had not discriminated against the natural descen-

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dants of Abraham. He had, in fact, given them the first chance to enter into this royal inheritance, for those from among the Israelitish nation who accepted Christ were the first ones to become the sons of God and thus members of his ruling house.

As we study this chapter we also learn that the original "olive tree" of promise is maintained, and that its branches would have been exclusively of the natural descendants of Abraham had they not, in their unbelief, rejected Jesus. But because of their unbelief they were broken off, Paul explains. However, this did not destroy the covenant tree; for wild branches, that is, Gentiles, are grafted into the tree to take the places of the natural branches which are broken off. This tree, then, having as its roots the promise made to Abraham and as its trunk the reiteration of that promise as given in many aspects by all the holy prophets of the Old Testament, remains, although many of its original branches are broken off and wild branches take their places.

Paul explains that this ingrafting of wild branches is "contrary to nature." (Rom. 11:24) Here is a most revealing statement. According to nature a branch which is grafted into a tree retains its original characteristics. The fruit which it bears is not changed by the nutriment of the tree into which it is grafted. This, indeed, is the purpose of grafting; namely, to obtain the particular variety of fruit desired. A horticulturist knows that when he grafts a branch of a choice variety of fruit tree into an uncultivated trunk of another tree, it will bear the choice fruit which he desires and will not be affected by the characteristics of the trunk into which it is grafted.

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But Paul explains that the ingrafting of Gentiles into the Israelitish tree of promise is “contrary to nature,” and so it is. In this case the branches are changed by the nutriment of the tree. They no longer remain “wild,” but become Israelites. The promises of God which gave life to the tree, enter into and transform their lives so that they become like the tree itself, bearing the fruits of righteousness which God intended should be brought forth under the influence of the exceeding great and precious promises which had been made to those who should become heirs of this “great salvation.” (Heb. 2:3) Certainly Paul could have made it no plainer that the real Israel of God, brought forth in harmony with the original covenant promises, is the faith seed of this Gospel age, made up of both Israelites and Gentiles!

The apostle further explains that the natural Israelites did not obtain that which they sought after, but the “election hath obtained it”—that is, those who by faith were qualified to become spiritual Israelites were chosen for that purpose—“and the rest were blinded.” (Rom. 11:7) Israel sought to attain righteousness pleasing to God by keeping the Law and thereby qualifying to be the holy nation and kingdom of priests, as promised. But that nation failed.

But this blindness is not to continue forever. It is a “blindness in part,” says the apostle, which has come to “Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” (Rom. 11:25) But note that this is a blindness of “Israel,” and not of Judah alone. The “fulness of the Gentiles” is a reference to the full number of Gentiles required to make up God’s foreordained number of the true Zion of Israel. When this number is complete, in the great mercy of God, favor will again be extended to the unbelieving Israelites:

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“There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Israel],” writes the apostle. —Rom.11:26

The introduction of the term “Sion” [Hebrew, Zion] at this point in Paul’s lesson is very significant. Zion was the capital hill in Jerusalem upon which the palace of David was built and from which the laws of God emanated to rule the typical nation of Israel. Here the apostle applies it to Christ and his church—made up of Jews and Gentiles—and tells us that out of Zion deliverance will come to the cast-off nation of Israel.

This is quite in harmony with one of the beautiful pictures of God’s kingdom given to us in the 14th chapter of Revelation. Here we read that a “Lamb” stands upon Mount Sion, “and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.” This is the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) In Revelation 5:5, he is identified as the “Lion of the tribe of Judah”—that is, the One whom Jacob prophesied would come out of the tribe of Judah. Those who are with the Lamb on Mount Zion are given the privilege of being the Gospel-age sons of God—the Father’s name being written in their foreheads. —Rev. 7:4-8

In the 7th chapter of Revelation these hundred and forty-four thousand followers of the Lamb are classified as Israelites and the symbolism is made the more complete by their being divided equally among the twelve tribes. A nucleus of these, as we have seen, were originally natural Israelites, but the remainder are chosen from among the Gentiles, and grafted into the Israelitish tree of promise, and, as Paul explains, partake “of the root and fatness

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of the olive tree,” making them also spiritual Israelites. (Rom. 11:17) These all are together with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and together with him will administer the laws of the kingdom of God.

In the last verse of Obadiah’s prophecy this ruling class in the Lord’s kingdom is referred to. The prophet declares that “saviors shall come up on Mount Zion ... and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” Ah yes, the very purpose of the establishment of the Lord’s kingdom in the hands of Jesus and his church is that they might bring deliverance to the whole world of mankind. So it is that out of Zion will come forth the Deliverer “and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” (Rom. 11:26) Truly, the ungodliness of all Israel will need to be turned away in order for the nation to be received back into the favor of God.

“For this is my covenant unto them, when I take away their sins,” Paul further explains. This is a reference to the “new covenant” promised by God through the Prophet Jeremiah. (Jer. 31:31-34) Turning to this prophecy we find God’s promise to forgive the iniquity of Israel, and to “remember their sin no more.” Paul explains that this is to be fulfilled following the completion of the Zion class—“when the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”—Rom. 11:25

And this new covenant, the prophet explains, is to be made “with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.” This promise of the new covenant was given following the revolt of the ten tribes, so the Lord makes sure to emphasize that the ten tribes, and also the two tribes, not only were guilty of transgressing the original covenant, but that all twelve tribes would not be blessed

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any more by him until the time came to make this new covenant with them; that only then would their iniquity be pardoned. And it is the inspired apostle who explains that this is not to occur until the “fulness of the Gentiles be come in” to make up the true kingdom of promise, the real seed of Abraham, which inherits the royal promises pertaining to the privilege of reigning over and blessing all the families of the earth.

God’s promised blessings to Israel under the new covenant which is to be made with them through Christ and the church are full and rich; but there is **no hint** that they **will be a ruling nation**. No, that **opportunity was lost** when Jesus said to them, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” Paul explains that God’s returning favor to the natural descendants of Abraham will mean “life from the dead.” That is to say, in order to fulfil all his promises concerning the new covenant and the blessings they will receive when the “Deliverer” comes out of Zion, it will be necessary for them to be raised from the dead.

It is most essential in our study of God’s plan to realize that the fulfillment of many of his promises does call for a resurrection of the dead. To lose sight of this fact leads the erring student to force applications of scriptures to imagined circumstances, or to anticipate developments in world affairs which will never occur. A revealing example of this forced, hence erroneous, method of interpreting the Scriptures is in connection with the promise that the divided tribes of Israel are to be reunited, as recorded in Ezekiel 37:15-28.

This promise has absolutely no reference to the hoped for uniting of various branches of the Anglo-Saxon race; but, as the entire chapter clearly reveals, is descriptive of the mighty work of God among his ancient people follow-

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ing their resurrection from the dead. Those who know of the blessed hope of a resurrection of the dead and that they will live again on the earth should have no difficulty in understanding the true meaning of this wonderful promise. It confirms Paul's statement, "What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"—Rom. 11:15

This is further confirmed by the prophecy of Eze-kiel 16:55-63. Here is a promise that the wicked city of Sodom, and others, shall be restored to their "former estate"—that is, the people of those cities are to be raised from the dead and given life as human beings here on the earth. The Lord tells Israel that when this occurs it will be discovered that the wicked cities of Sodom and Samaria were in reality not nearly so shameful as the Israelites had been. These heathen people had never been given God's law, hence were not so responsible for their sin.

Nevertheless, because of God's covenant with Israel he will remember and bless them by giving them life under a new covenant, here styled an "everlasting covenant." When this occurs, which obviously will be after the resurrection, they will then remember their ways, the prophet explains, and be ashamed. Yet the promise is that not only will God enter into a new covenant with them, but that joined with them in that covenant will be the Gentile nations which will also have been brought back from the dead. Even in this, therefore, because of God's original promises to the fathers of Israel, they will have a certain priority of blessing in that the new covenant will first be made with them, and then extended to embrace all nations.

As the plan of God through Israel unfolds we find that the true "seed" of Abraham which is to be the channel of

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blessing to all nations is a spiritual class, being exalted to glory, honor, and immortality. Paul explains concerning these that “this mortal must put on immortality.” (I Cor. 15:53) Peter explains that they become partakers of the “divine nature,” and that as such they will have an abundant entrance “into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (II Pet 1:4, 11) Paul admonishes the prospective heirs of the kingdom to set their affections on things above, “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” (Col. 3:1-3) Christ was exalted to the divine plane of life at the time of his resurrection, and now we are partakers of the same “heavenly calling.”—Heb. 3:1

It is impossible for our finite minds to grasp the height of glory to which spiritual Zion is exalted in the divine arrangement for the blessing of all nations. The Apostle John declares that it does not yet appear what we shall be except that we shall be like Christ and see him as he is since his resurrection, not as he was before his crucifixion. (I John 3:2) Another promise is that the associates of Christ will be “caught up,” that is exalted, to meet Christ “in the air.” (I Thess. 4:17) Satan is referred to as the present “prince of the power of the air.” (Eph. 2:2) Evidently “air” is used in the Scriptures to symbolize, first, the invisible rulership of the prince of this present evil world, and also the invisible rulership of Christ in the world to come. In this future rulership the Gospel age house of sons will be associated.

But the spiritual Zion of God will have human, hence visible, representatives through which contact will be maintained with the people once the kingdom of the Lord is fully established. Various scriptures indicate that these will be the resurrected prophets and other faithful servants

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of God who proved their worthiness during the ages preceding the first advent of Jesus. They were the “fathers” of Israel, but are to become the “children” of The Christ, who will make them “princes in all the earth.”—Ps. 45:16

They, like the spiritual Israel of this age, proved their worthiness of the high position they will occupy in the kingdom on earth by their faith in the promises of God—a faith that was often tried to the uttermost. They “died in faith,” the apostle declares, “not having received the promises;” “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Heb. 11:13, 39, 40) They proved worthy of a “better resurrection” than the world, but because the due time for the heavenly calling of spiritual Israel had not come, they will not participate in the “first resurrection” of those who will live and reign with Christ a thousand years.—Rev. 20:4, 6

Jesus said that in the kingdom of God the people from the east, west, north, and south, would “sit down” with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets. (Luke 13:28, 29) In the Greek, the word here used and translated “sit down” conveys the thought of sitting at the feet of a master, or teacher, and such will the ancient worthy class be to the people—teachers, instructors, guides. They will impart a knowledge of the new kingdom laws, speaking as the mouthpieces of the heavenly Zion. It is undoubtedly this two-phase arrangement of the kingdom that is referred to by the prophets Isaiah and Micah in the statement that “the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”—Zion being the spiritual phase of the kingdom and Jerusalem representing its human representatives who will be the instructors of the

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people.—Mic. 4:1-4; Isa. 2:1-4

These prophets make it clear that this arrangement will come into being in the “last days,” and that then “many people” and “many nations” will recognize the authority of the new kingdom and will say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob [Israel]; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.... And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.”—Mic. 4:1-4

It is well to notice that in this wonderful promise of future kingdom blessings upon the nations they obtain the blessings by their recognition of the authority vested in the “house of the God of Jacob,” or Israel. This is God’s ruling house of sons to which the term Israel has been applied. The rulers in this “house” are those who inherit the royal promises made first to the natural descendants of Jacob, but forfeited by them through unbelief and disloyalty. This ruling house of God is the spiritual Zion of the prophecies. Jesus is the chief of the “sons” who compose it, and there will be a hundred and forty-four thousand other “sons” with him in the spiritual phase of the kingdom.

The 2nd Psalm presents a most vivid picture of Zion’s authority in the earth. The prophet quotes the Lord as saying, “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” (Ps 2:6) The fact is also revealed that this “King” is the Son of God— “Thou art my Son.” (7th verse) He is, in

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fact, the Head of the house of sons who constitute the Zion class. To him, the prophet explains, the nations are to be given as an inheritance, “and the uttermost parts of the earth” as a possession.—Ps. 2:8

But he will not endeavor to rehabilitate these nations, nor reform them, in order that they may be used as the kingdom of God. It is presumptuous to suppose that the British Commonwealth of Nations and the United States will be used for any such purpose. They are all merely nations of “this present evil world,” despite the fact that a show of religious devotion is made in connection with some of their governmental affairs. Their governments are not being operated by God nor for God, but represent merely the failing efforts of fallen man.

David was the first of Israel’s faithful kings and, because of his desire for a righteous reign, is used in the prophecies to symbolize Christ and his reign. The throne of ancient Israel was looked upon as the throne of the Lord, and David sat upon that throne as the Lord’s representative. David himself acknowledged this as indicated by I Chronicles 29:11,12. But this typical throne of the Lord, instead of merging into the real kingdom with the coming of Israel’s true King, Jesus, was overthrown in the days of Zedekiah, and was to remain so until “he come whose right it is.”—Ezek. 21:25-27

The birth of the rightful heir to David’s throne—or the throne of the Lord on which David sat—was prophesied by Isaiah. “Unto us a child is born,” wrote the prophet, “unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David,

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and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6-8

There is no question about this prophecy referring to the birth of Jesus and to the worldwide dominion ultimately to be established by him. And it should be noted that a part of his work is to put in order the throne of David, and to establish it. This is definite proof that from God’s standpoint his kingdom, as it was represented in the reign of David, had lapsed—lapsed, as the prophet declares, “until he come whose right it is.” Christ himself is the antitypical David, and the setting up of his kingdom rule in the earth will be the foretold ordering of the throne of David.

Another prophecy states that Christ will “build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down,” and will “build again the ruins thereof,” and “set it up.” James explains that when this is done, then the residue, or remainder, of mankind will have an opportunity to seek after the Lord and obtain his blessing. (Acts 15:13-18; Amos 9:11, 12) It is important to realize, however, that this rebuilding of the tabernacle, or house of David, does not occur until after the spiritual ruling house of the Lord—the “people for his name”—are taken out from among the Gentiles.

And how blessed the assurance that of the increase of Christ’s dominion there is to be no end. This means that ultimately it will embrace all nations. That will be when they say, “Let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord,” as foretold in Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4. And how blessed the reassurance that “the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” Christ’s kingdom will not be set

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up by men, nor will its laws be administered by humanly constituted governments. It will be God's zeal and power which will accomplish it, not the fury of bombing planes and navies.

God's zeal has already been operating in this great undertaking. His power raised Jesus from the dead to be the Head over his house of ruling sons. It will continue to operate as the footstep followers of Jesus are brought forth in the "first resurrection" to live and reign with Christ. A still further manifestation of divine power will be the raising of the human representatives of the kingdom, the ancient worthies, from the dead. Surely the great God of the universe whose zeal for the blessing of the nations is so boundless, and whose power is so limitless, does not need the power and prestige of worldly empires to accomplish his purposes.

Any endeavor to set up Christ's kingdom through an alliance with earthly governments is contrary to the will of God. It is but another conception of church-state union which has been the curse of Europe for centuries, and which the Lord is now destroying. Let us leave the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the hands of the Lord, cooperating with him by following in the footsteps of Jesus, who laid down his life that the people might live. It is our privilege to suffer and to die with Jesus now, in order that we may live and reign with him as the true Israel of God when his spiritual Zion becomes the glory of all the earth.

Those who take the view that the ten lost tribes of Israel are now represented in the Anglo-Saxon race, and that it is God's blessing upon these tribes which explains the dominant position of America and Great Britain in world affairs, claim that the many prophecies promising the re-

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turn of God's ancient people to the Promised Land in this end of the age refer only to the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This view is not in harmony with the Scriptures, for the prophecies pertaining to the return of God's scattered people to their own land repeatedly use the term Israel, and in many instances both Israel and Judah, in order that we might know that they refer to all the children of Israel—all twelve tribes.

Note, for example, Jeremiah 16:14-18. In this prophecy a comparison is made between the exodus of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt and their being brought back to Palestine from the land of the "north," and "from all the lands" whither they had been driven because of their sin. Furthermore, we are told in this prophecy that these Israelites were to be hunted "from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks." This scattered condition of Israel in the last days is hardly like that of the two remaining powerful nations of the earth who allegedly are about to be used to deliver and bless all mankind as the kingdom of God.

And let us not overlook the fact that it is "Israel" that this prophecy is speaking of—all Israel—and not merely the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This is made doubly certain in the next chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy (the 17th) where the dispersion of Judah is mentioned separately as though the Lord would have us understand that not only did the ten-tribe kingdom sin against him, but the two-tribe kingdom as well, and that because of this all twelve tribes went into captivity, being scattered among the nations.

Jeremiah 30:3 is also very much to the point along this line. The text reads, "For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people

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Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.” What could be more definite than this as proof that all twelve tribes continue in captivity together until the time comes when the Lord will return them to the land which he gave to their fathers! This prophecy was written subsequent to the division of the ten tribes from the other two, hence the inspired prophet refers to both groups and assures us that in the last days God will deal with them all on the same basis; that they would all continue to be a scattered people until the time came for their repossession of the Land of Promise. Certainly there is nothing here to indicate that the ten tribes would virtually be ruling the world when the time came for the setting up of the kingdom of God.

The 10th verse of this 30th chapter of Jeremiah also uses the term Israel—not merely Judah—and indicates, even as the 3rd verse, that in the latter days these natural descendants of Jacob would not form a consolidated family of nations, but would be scattered afar, and in captivity to the nations. The text reads, “Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be at rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.”

The prophecies indicate that the time for the returning of Israel and Judah to the Promised Land would be one of great trouble and warlike distress upon all the nations. For this reason God’s ancient people are represented as saying, “We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.” (Jer. 30:5) How tragically true this has already been. Joel 3:1, 2 explains that this would be a time

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when the nations assembled for the final struggle of the ages, and that one of the issues at stake would be the Promised Land. He indicates that the attempted solution of this problem would be the dividing of the land. All of this we have seen, so there is no question but that we have now reached the time when the natural house of Israel will again dwell in the land which God gave to their fathers, and will be the first to whom the blessings of the kingdom of Christ will be offered through the resurrected ancient worthies who will then be “princes in all the earth.”—Ps. 45:16

There were no conditions attached to the promise that Abraham and his posterity as a group should have the land of Canaan “as an everlasting possession,” so the land will be restored to them. (Gen. 17:8) And in that land those individuals who obey the laws of the new kingdom will live forever. And from that land, under the direction of the resurrected prophets and other ancient worthies, the blessings of Christ’s thousand-year reign will be extended to all nations.

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