

This is Part Nine of the Serial Publication in PDF and Video, including the Introduction to Section Two of the book, and all of Chapter Six.

The
PRODIGAL SON
PROPHECY

God's Amazing Plan for the Restoration of the Two
Hebrew Houses and the Salvation of the Gentiles

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SECTION TWO

THE TWO HOUSE PROPHECY

THE DIVISION AND REUNIFICATION OF THE HOUSE OF
JACOB AS THE BACKDROP TO THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY

INTRODUCTION TO SECTION TWO

In the early days of my prophecy studies, I read *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy* (1954) by Herbert W. Armstrong of the Worldwide Church of God, a now-defunct organization considered by most Christian authorities to be a cult. However, I found most of the book to be quite fascinating and Biblically sound, while other portions were in my view not Scriptural. Shortly afterward I learned that the portions of the book I found so intriguing had actually been plagiarized nearly word-for-word by Armstrong from a much earlier book, *Judah's Scepter and Joseph's Birthright*, written by J.H. Allen in 1902. I quickly obtained a copy of Allen's book and have since read it three separate times. It is by far the most fascinating and illuminating book I have ever read and I highly recommend it.

I later learned that Allen, a founder of the Holiness Movement in the 19th century, had, without attribution, borrowed heavily from an earlier work on the same theme: H.L. Chamberlain's 1887 book *Judah and Israel, Or, The Kingdom of the God of Heaven (Dan. 2-14) as it is Now: And the Kingdom of the Son of David (Dan. 7-13,14) as it Will be*, which in turn drew upon an 1840 book of lectures written and published by historian John Wilson under the title *Our Israelitish Origins*, inspired by Sharon Turner's 1799 work *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, and based upon Wilson's own research into the ancient writings of Ptolemy, Diodorus, Herodotus, and Josephus. So, this is a topic with deep and scholarly roots, though I think Allen's version is by far the most readable.

Judah's Scepter and Joseph's Birthright expounds and interweaves two separate and distinct doctrines: 1) the Two House Teaching and 2) British Israelism. I can confirm from long and diligent study that the first of these, regarding the Two Houses is 100% Biblically sound, as I will show in this section, The Two House Prophecy.

The latter doctrine, known alternately as British Israelism or Anglo-Israelism is beyond the scope of our current study. I can attest that the doctrine is not entirely sound as presented by Allen, relying in part on highly questionable extra-Biblical sources, although the portions of the teaching grounded in the Bible are quite plausible and very intriguing, and whatever errors may exist do not detract from the readability of Allen's enjoyable and engaging style.

Unfortunately, while Allen's book is decidedly NOT Anti-Semitic (nor is the authentic Two House teaching itself), twisted, non-Biblical versions of the Two House teaching were so thoroughly exploited and misused by various cults and Anti-Semitic groups in the 20th century that the subject began to be shunned by mainstream Christianity around a century ago and eventually forgotten. The average American Christian today has never even heard of the Two House Teaching.

In my view, what the Bible teaches about the Two Houses is not only extremely illuminating, it is essential to understanding both Bible history and end-times prophecy.

CHAPTER SIX:

JUDAH'S SCEPTER AND JOSEPH'S BIRTHRIGHT

GOD'S 7-POINT COVENANT WITH THE HEBREWS

When God chose Abraham to be the progenitor of His chosen people He made seven promises to Him.

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.' Abram fell face down, and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you:

*[1] You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; **I will make nations of you, and***

*[2] **Kings will come from you.***

*[3] **I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.***

*[4] **The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God' "*** (Genesis 17:1-8).

Later, when Abraham's faith was tested by God in the command to sacrifice his son, Isaac upon an altar, God added a codicil to His covenant that included three new terms:

“By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and

[5] I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and

[6] your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

[7] In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice’ ”
(Genesis 22:16-18).

With this codicil, God established that the Messiah would come through the line of Isaac (#7). This has been termed the **Scepter Promise**, because it covenants that the King of Kings would come through Isaac. (Unlike the other covenantal terms, the word “seed” in term #7 is singular, as attested by Paul in Galatians 3:16).

It also established that the **Birthright Promise**, already previously covenanted, would be expanded in terms #5 to guarantee vast numbers of descendants.

Significantly, term #5 of the Birthright Promise was given a second witness in the prophecy of Rebecca’s brothers, when she left their family to become Isaac’s wife: *“May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them”* (Genesis 24:60).

Importantly for our study, the story of Abraham and Isaac represents the first iteration of the Passover pattern in Scripture, and introduces the theme of resurrection from the dead, as it necessarily assumes that Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead if indeed he had completed the sacrifice (since Isaac was the son of promise through whom God had covenanted to bring many kings and nations), and secondarily that Isaac was metaphorically raised from the dead by the substitutionary offering of the young ram: *“Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and in a sense, he did receive Isaac back from death”* (Hebrews 11:19).

Genesis 22 is the passage of Scripture read by Jews even to this day on the Feast of Trumpets, accompanied by the blowing of the Shofar, the ram’s horn. These are powerful symbolic supports for our conclusion that the Resurrection and Rapture of the church will occur on a Feast of Trumpets.

After Abraham’s death, God confirmed His promises to Isaac:

“The Lord appeared to him and said, ‘Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. I will multiply your descendants as

the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed’ “ (Genesis 26:2-4).

Isaac was the first son born of God’s promise and first generation with the ostensible right of choice whom to bless among his sons as his heir to that promise (though his choice would also reflect God’s will). His choice of Jacob over Esau (engineered by the conspiracy of Rebecca and Jacob) also introduced a new pattern in the unfolding of God’s plan: the passing over of the firstborn son in the assignment of the birthright promises, in exception to the law of seniority by the firstborn in the right of inheritance.

That law, called primogeniture, is featured prominently in the Two House prophecy, both in the observance and in the exception, especially the right of the firstborn to a *double portion* of the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17).

In any case, Isaac passed the blessing of God’s promises to Jacob, saying in Genesis 28:3-4, *“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.”*

God then ratified Isaac’s prayer in Genesis 28:13-14:

“I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Thus, God not only appointed to Jacob all of the promises He had made to Abraham and Isaac, He also proclaimed a blessing to “all the families of the earth” through the very existence of Jacob and his descendants, who would be thoroughly dispersed throughout the world. By His own mouth, God declared His chosen people, the Hebrews, to be a blessing to all humanity.

THE DIVISION OF THE PROMISES TO TWO SEPARATE HOUSES

This diffusion throughout the world of Hebrew seed, and the effect of the promises God had attached to it, was accomplished by the establishment of Twelve Tribes through four distinct genetic lines. These are the Twelve Tribes of Israel, through Leah, her handmaiden Zilpah, Rachel and her handmaiden Bilhah. Four women, four bloodlines that would eventually be scattered to the four directions per Genesis 28:14.

The laws and customs of his father-in-law Laban required Jacob to accept Leah as his first wife, but her younger sister Rachel was Jacob’s chosen and favored wife. **The Two Hebrew Houses were**

founded in these two marriages, and God divided the promises between them.

The House of Judah was rooted in the marriage with Leah, and it held the Scepter Promise which was fulfilled when the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings was born in the lineage of Judah.

The House of Israel was rooted in the marriage with Rachel, and it held the Birthright Promise through Joseph, the firstborn son of Jacob's favored bride.

We will now explore the fascinating Biblical history of how this division unfolded and its significance. First, let us remember the law of primogeniture and look at the seniority of Jacob's male heirs, and how the promises of God were allocated. This is the order of birth of Jacob's sons:

1. Rueben by Leah
2. Simeon by Leah
3. Levi by Leah
- 4. Judah by Leah**
5. Dan by Jacob's concubine Bilhah, handmaid of Rachel
6. Naphtali by Bilhah
7. Gad by Jacob's concubine Zilpah, handmaid of Leah
8. Asher by Zilpah
9. Issachar by Leah
10. Zebulun by Leah
- 11. Joseph by Rachel**
12. Benjamin by Rachel

Reuben was the firstborn by Leah, but was disqualified from receiving the firstborn blessing (1 Chronicles 5:1) because he slept with his father's concubine Bilhah (Genesis 35:22).

"Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph)" (1 Chronicles 5:1-2).

Simeon and Levi were the second and third sons by Leah, but they were disqualified from leadership (Genesis 49:5-7) because of their excessive and treacherous revenge against the men of Shechem in retaliation for the rape of their sister Dinah (Genesis 34).

Thus Judah, while not given the firstborn birthright (which instead went to Joseph, firstborn of Rachel), became the political leader of the twelve tribes and received the Scepter Promise. As prophesied by Jacob before he died:

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh [Christ] comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (Genesis 49:10). [*** add commentary identifying this as the second coming, and perhaps discuss America as an end times “Shiloh”]

So at this point, the promises that had been held as a single package by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are now divided in two, a portion held by each of the houses of Jacob’s two wives, represented by Judah and Joseph respectively.

But remember that the Birthright Promise carries the special blessing of a double portion of the inheritance. Thus, Joseph’s position among his brothers received special honor in that his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh were elevated to equal status with their uncles. Instead of the Tribe of Joseph, there became the Tribe of Ephraim and the Tribe of Manasseh. Joseph’s double portion was two nations of the twelve instead of one, and two-twelfths of the distribution of the promised land. (The reason that this did not add up to thirteen tribes and thirteen shares of land was that the Levites were not considered a tribe but were set apart as the priests of God and He was their portion).

Here, again, the younger son of Joseph, Ephraim, benefitted from an exception to the rule of primogeniture. Ephraim received the firstborn blessing at the hand of his grandfather Jacob/Israel instead of the older brother Manasseh.

*“Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel’s left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right, and brought them close to him. But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn....When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim’s head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. Joseph said to his father, ‘Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.’ But his father refused and said, ‘I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and **his descendants shall become a multitude of nations**’”* (Genesis 48:13-19).

“For I am a father to Israel [says the Lord God] And Ephraim is My firstborn” (Jeremiah 31:9).

So, at the time of Jacob’s death, when “All Israel” was living in Egypt, in the Land of Goshen, centuries before the entrance into the promised land, and long before the Kingdom of David would be divided into the nations of Judah and Israel, the two houses were well established. They were represented by Judah and Joseph (via Ephraim), holding the Scepter Promise and the Birthright Promise respectively.

Now that we are aware of the special roles and relationship of Judah and Ephraim in Bible history and prophecy, numerous Bible stories take on a new meaning and significance.

Consider for example the incident at Kadesh Barnea, where twelve Hebrew spies were sent into the promised land to scout out the prospects for its conquest in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is not generally remembered that the only two spies who (trusting God) advocated for immediate invasion, represented the tribes of Ephraim (Joshua, Numbers 13:8, 16) and Judah (Caleb, Numbers 13:6).

However, for the purposes of our study, we will now jump ahead to the post-Davidic establishment of the nations of Judah and Israel on the foundations of these two Hebrew houses.

THE TWO HOUSES UNDER KING DAVID

After the conquest of Canaan, and a long period of God's provision to the Hebrew tribes through a series of Judges, the people demanded the formation of a Hebrew monarchy. Subsequently, via the prophet Samuel (who unsuccessfully warned the people against it on God's behalf), Saul was appointed and anointed King over all twelve tribes.

In due season, Saul (who became a type of Antichrist) was rejected by God in favor of David, the shepherd. David became a type of Christ and the "apple of God's eye" because He served God with his whole heart and because he unified the two houses under one authority. Note how central this two house perspective was in the plans of God:

"...the LORD has sworn to David...to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba" (2 Samuel 3:9-10). (This was many years before the houses of Israel and Judah were formed into two kingdoms!)

Importantly, David's role as a model of Christ is not primarily related to the first coming of Christ, but to the second.

In His second coming Christ will not come as a baby, or a suffering servant, but as the King of Kings to first "judge and make war" and then "rule the nations with a rod of iron" (Revelation 19:11-16) much like David had done (1 Chronicles 28:3).

And perhaps the most significant thing that Christ will do at His second coming, a fact almost entirely missed in the church today, is to unify the two houses! Consider God's emphasis in His message to Mary via the angel Gabriel:

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Why the term “House of Jacob?” Because the House of Jacob encompasses all twelve tribes, while the House of Israel does not.

We will consider one more item regarding the soon second coming of Christ before we turn back to the past and chronicle the division of David’s kingdom into two. That item is the prophecy of Ezekiel 37. Typically, this chapter, which begins with the prophecy of the dry bones, is wrongly interpreted (due to lack of understanding about the two houses) to describe the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel. This is despite God’s very clear explanation of the prophecy in verse 11: “*Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.*”

One might question whether the emphasis on the “whole” house of Israel is intended to incorporate all twelve tribes, but that notion is definitively quashed in verses 16-24, in the second of the three chronologically sequential and interrelated proverbs:

“[S]on of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, ‘For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.’ Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. When the sons of your people speak to you saying, ‘Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?’ say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand. The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.’ ””

We will return to this chapter later for a closer examination but for now simply note that the prophecy is clearly related to two distinct kingdoms founded on the two houses (Ephraim and Judah), and that, at a yet-future date, these two kingdoms will be reunited by Christ, who will rule them from the throne of David.