

Fundamentals of Belief  
#16B: The Scepter and the Birthright

Edited Sermon Transcript  
Jon W. Brisby; 12-29-2001

We want to continue, brethren, with the series on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. If you will recall from last time, we began the first sermon on fundamental number sixteen. Fundamental number sixteen, as I already warned you, is going to take me quite a number of sermons to get through because there is so much packed in to it. It's going to take us awhile to get through all of the very necessary information in order to cover it adequately. It's also the longest fundamental, I believe, of the twenty-six fundamentals in that writing. Let me read it:

We believe the PROMISES were made to Abraham and his "seed," Christ, and that the Covenants (including the New Covenant), and the promises pertain alone to ISRAEL. That our white, English-speaking peoples of today are enjoying the national phases of the promises—that of MATERIAL blessings—called the "Birthright," which was handed down thru the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, whose descendants we are; but that the "Scepter"—the promise of kings, and the SPIRITUAL phase of the promises, including Christ and salvation thru Him—was given to and shall not depart from Judah of whom are the race we know today as the Jews. We believe eternal life is God's gift resting upon the promises made to Abraham and his "seed," Christ, designating this earth (made new), not heaven, as our eternal home and reward. That salvation is thru Christ alone, and not inherited thru the Birthright (right of birth) and that salvation is freely open to Gentiles, who, thru Christ, become Abraham's children and are adopted into the family of Israel and become heirs according to the promises.

It is a mouthful, and the concepts that are included in that fundamental require a lot in order for us to expound on that material adequately. In a nutshell, we are talking primarily about a philosophy that is called the "Christian Identity Movement" or "Israel Identity" by many in this world. It is the belief that the lost ten tribes of Israel actually have been preserved and that the descendants of the United States and the democracies of Western Europe are the literal descendants of those ten tribes; and thereby, the great wealth that we have enjoyed for centuries in our nations is a result of the Birthright promises that God gave to Abraham.

As I've already started to elaborate in the first sermon, and we'll pick it up today, please keep in mind, brethren, that those promises and that wealth are not because those descendants of Israel were worthy in any regard. No, the Birthright includes promises to physical descendants whether they were worthy of blessings or not. That's the difference between that which is given by a right of birth and that which comes through Jesus Christ to those who are faithful to a call. No, those who are receiving the Birthright promises have nothing to glory about in themselves. They are simply the recipients by virtue of the faithfulness of Abraham. Abraham was the one who proved that he was faithful to God. He was the father of the faithful; therefore, God made a covenant with him. We went through that; let's notice it again.

Genesis 22:15:

And the angel of the [Eternal] called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the [Eternal], for because thou hast done this thing . . .

What are we talking about? This is the reconfirmation of the covenant that God made to Abraham after Abraham proved that he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. God tried him. He gave him a command and told him to sacrifice his only son—the very son that He had promised and through whom was going to come the covenant promises and the fulfillment of all that God was going to give to Abraham and his descendants. It was going to be through Isaac, not through Ishmael. Yet, when Isaac was probably about twelve years old, God gave Abraham a test and said, "I want you to take Isaac, and I want you to go to this mountain and sacrifice him on an altar." Which one of us could have passed such a test and done what Abraham did? As the Apostle Paul said, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." He believed in the promises of God. He didn't doubt or attempt to use his own human wisdom at this time. He had learned his lesson from mistakes in the past, and he implicitly trusted God.

Obviously, Abraham knew that if God was requiring him to sacrifice his son, it must be that He was planning to resurrect him, because God had made the promise that all of those blessings, nationally and spiritually, were going to come through Isaac. That couldn't happen if he were dead. Yet God was requiring Abraham to sacrifice him, so Abraham must have assumed that God was going to resurrect his son.

You know the story. Even as Abraham was putting the knife to his son's throat, that angel stopped him and said, "Don't lay a hand on the boy," and he provided instead a ram for that sacrifice. He stopped Abraham, but Abraham was fully willing to obey God. It wasn't God's will that he sacrifice Isaac at all, and God has never been the author of child sacrifice. Yet Abraham's faithfulness to be willing to carry out the very command of God demonstrated that he did trust God. He loved Him. He wasn't just using lip service and doing what people do today, saying, "Oh, I love the Lord." No, Abraham truly believed God, and he proved by his actions that he loved God and wanted to obey Him. He feared that God. For that reason, then, God made this unconditional promise to Abraham because of his absolute, unconditional, unwavering faith.

... By myself have I sworn, saith the [Eternal], for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

This is a repetition of the very covenant promises that He had already made years ago to Abraham. But now, instead of those promises being conditional based upon Abraham obeying and doing certain things, God has made those promises unconditional, which means it doesn't matter from this time forward what Abraham did, or even what Isaac, what Jacob or any of the descendants of Israel would do. God had bound Himself at this point to fulfill those promises.

So why is it that the Northwestern democracies of Europe, Britain, and the United States have received the great national wealth that we have enjoyed as nations for these centuries? Because we were better than any other nations on the earth? Not at all. There are a lot of people who have embraced the idea of the identity of Israel in the white, English-speaking peoples of the world today, but they have done so in a very twisted, perverted way.

I am going to do a sermon specifically on that subject, because it is very likely that this doctrine, this very belief, in the identity of the lost tribes of Israel may very well get us into trouble in the future. It is considered an exclusive ideology. It's considered isolationist to think that certain peoples were blessed by God and set apart. Many people have used that and twisted it because they want to make themselves special. Many of these hate groups—these neo-Nazi groups, skinheads—have embraced this doctrine of the identity of Israel. How do they use it? They pervert it tremendously to use it as a way to justify that they're better than other races, and that they have the right to this and the right to that; and it's not true at all. They certainly don't understand that the fact that we are the recipients of those great promises and the national wealth, the glory, the strength and the power, has nothing to do with the fact that we earned it. No, we did not. In fact, we have probably earned it less than any other nation on the face of the earth. The peoples of the Northwestern democracies of Europe and the United States have perverted those promises and have misused and misapplied them more than any other peoples on the earth. We, of all people, deserve nothing. The fact that we received it, is a testament to the very promises of God and the fact that He has fulfilled His promise to Abraham—and no other reason.

As we'll see when we go forward, it was after Solomon's death that the northern kingdom was rent away from his descendants, except for the one tribe. The rest of that nation of Israel was given to Jeroboam; and the northern kingdom, headquartered in Samaria, is where that Birthright under Ephraim and Manasseh passed. We're not going to get into that in this sermon, but hopefully we'll cover it in the next sermon. That kingdom was never faithful to God. It started idol worship—calf worship—from the very beginning under Jeroboam's reign, and there was never a faithful king of Israel. There were only faithful kings in Judah, but there was never a faithful king in all of Israel; yet that was the very line in which the promises of the Birthright—wealth, prosperity, strength and power—were going to reside as God had promised. It was given and passed down to the descendants of Israel, specifically the descendants of his son Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh. That's what we're going to cover today.

The Birthright and the Scepter—the two parts of the promises to Abraham, and we went through that last time to indicate that it was a twofold promise. The first part, as we just read, ". . . in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies . . ." Those are physical promises. There's no promise in that portion concerning eternal life. There's no reference in that to the

coming of Jesus Christ. That is a promise specifically of national wealth, strength and power. That's precisely, then, what the physical descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh have received.

The second part, in verse 18, is the promise of grace through Jesus Christ. "... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed . . ." How was it that all nations were going to be blessed, and not just the Israelites, and specifically not just the descendants predominately of Ephraim and Manasseh? How were all nations going to be blessed on the face of the earth? Because Jesus Christ was going to become the descendant of Abraham through whom all humankind would have an opportunity for salvation—the most important promise. But both promises were included—the promises of race and grace. The promises of race were given to the descendants of Jacob through Joseph, and the promises of grace came through Jesus Christ to benefit all mankind.

The Birthright promises are those that provide a native right or privilege—any right that is acquired by birth. It's not earned. If you were the first-born son, you automatically earned the right to the greatest portion in the family. That was the continuation, because that son was then responsible for taking care of the other members of the family—the weak, the destitute, the widows. That double portion, that greater portion, automatically went by birth to the oldest son. That's the way it worked. It didn't mean that son had to qualify for it. He didn't have to be better, more wise or more worthy in any way. By virtue of birth and being the firstborn, he automatically derived the benefit of the birthright.

The Scepter promises, then, refer to the kingly office, the royal power, the badge or command of sovereignty. That's the second part of this covenant promise to Abraham, through whom, as we're going to see, those promises were passed to Judah, and not to any of the other sons of Jacob who became Israel. That promise included the fact that the kings of Judah would be the royal line through whom Jesus Christ would be born, which is exactly what occurred. Jesus Christ, that one seed, would make the way possible for the salvation of all human beings. These two distinct promises were given to Abraham, reconfirmed to Isaac, and then reconfirmed again to Jacob. And so they were passed down through those three men. That's why you hear it repeatedly said, "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Why is that important? Because it was to those three men that the covenant promises were reconfirmed generation after generation. That brings us up to the end of the sermon last time.

Now, what happened in the fulfillment of those covenant promises from the time that they were given to Jacob? That's what we want to go through this afternoon. From the time of Jacob forward, we find that those covenant promises became divided. There was a separation, because Jacob had twelve sons and they did not all receive the benefit of those covenant promises. They did not all receive the promise of both the Scepter and the Birthright. No, the Scepter and the Birthright promises—the two phases of that covenant with Abraham—became separated and went different routes. That's what we want to trace today.

Re-quoting a portion of our fundamental, "... but that the 'Scepter'—the promise of kings, and the SPIRITUAL phase of the promises, including Christ and salvation thru Him—was given to and shall not depart from Judah of whom are the race we know today as the Jews." So we want to look at the Biblical scriptures that support that fundamental of belief. Let's begin in Genesis 49:10. Here we find it stated very clearly by God: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . ." Very straightforward.

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.

This is a reference to the fact that Christ would come out of the descendants of Judah. Christ was a Jew. He was a descendant of Judah, but the thing that most of the world—and especially those who call themselves Christians today—do not understand is that Israel is much broader than the Jews. The Jews are Israelites, but not all Israelites are Jews. Remember, the Jews were only one tribe of twelve. There were twelve sons of Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. Judah was only one son. It was through that son that the promise of the Scepter was to pass, which is exactly what has happened. But the other phases of the promises in that covenant to Abraham did not go to Judah. If God did not lie and if our Bibles are true, then there must be a fulfillment of the Birthright promises somewhere else in the world. And that, we are going to substantiate.

King David and all succeeding kings of David's line were of Judah because David's ancestor was Judah. In fact, his son Solomon and all of those continuing sons throughout the history of the Jews, as chronicled in Kings and Chronicles, were all of that same dynasty of David. One thing to recognize, brethren, is that there was only one single dynasty. How unusual is it that, over hundreds and hundreds of years, there was an unbroken dynasty of Judah?

Now, as we'll see when we get to it next time, God divided that kingdom and placed the northern ten tribes under King Jeroboam who was not a Jew at all. He was not of Judah. Guess who Jeroboam was descended from in Israel? Ephraim. There's a reason for that. He was going to continue the Birthright promises of that kingly line of Ephraim and Manasseh. Just keep it in mind.

Within that northern kingdom that was never faithful to God, that immediately adopted calf worship and did all kinds of despicable, evil things until God took them into captivity by the Assyrians, there were, I think, at least thirteen dynasties. There was never a consistent dynasty in the northern kingdom. Jeroboam's descendants only lasted two or three generations, and then God rent it out of his hands and gave it to another. So it passed through multiple families in the kingdom of the north until they were finally taken into captivity and lost from sight. But in Judah it was a different story. The Davidic line was intact, and from that one family came the descendants of Christ who was the very fulfillment of that High Priest and that King. He will take possession of His throne at His second coming. But King David and all succeeding kings of David's line were of Judah. Jesus Christ was born of the house of David of the tribe of Judah.

Notice John 4:21. This, now, is Jesus in a conversation with this Samaritan woman at the well. The woman claimed Abraham as their descendant as well, because there are many that want to claim the promises and the benefits of being descendants of Abraham. But what did Christ say?

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

What did Christ mean by that? This woman was claiming certain privileges as a Samaritan, as a descendant of Abraham, yet Christ clarified, "No, salvation is of the Jews." What did Christ mean by that? Was He talking about just the physical Jews, the descendants of that son, Judah, the flesh and blood progeny over all centuries? Are those the only ones, then, that Christ was saying had an opportunity at salvation? No. We're getting ready to see what Christ really meant by that. But He begins by saying, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." Keep it in mind.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Were the physical Jews, who were carrying out their ritualistic worship and practices, worshipping God in the Spirit? Not at all. Were they the ones to whom God had given His priceless law—the Ten Commandments and the statutes and judgments? Absolutely. That law is not physical; that is a spiritual law. Those are the laws of God that are immutable, yet the Jews also continued the physical practices of the sacrificial system that had been added later and was not a part of the original gift of the law. The original laws of God began even at the very time of creation, because God created the Sabbath day, when? On the seventh day of creation after He had made all the rest—reconstituted the earth's surface, created animals and man. And on the seventh day He rested. That was the beginning of the Sabbath day, one of the very Ten Commandments. So those Ten Commandments were just a restatement of laws that had already existed from the time of man's existence. What was given on Mt. Sinai was not the first giving of the law; it was a codification of the laws that had always applied.

The only thing that was new was the sacrificial system that was added and commanded of the Jews through the Levitical priesthood. It was a foreshadow of the coming of Jesus Christ. But now, here was Christ, standing in their midst, certifying by all of the signs that He gave and by what He was saying that He was the One. He was the Messiah, the Son of God, who had come to fulfill those prophecies, and the Jews didn't accept Him. They believed that they were going to receive all of the benefits of the spiritual blessings of God by their rituals and their sacrificial system. They thought they could do it in the flesh. And so Christ certified that salvation is of the Jews, but was He saying that it was by virtue of the Jewish people in the flesh and by their rituals in the temple? Not at all, because He says immediately, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth . . ."

Romans 1:16 begins to expand on it. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation . . ." Paul is speaking about salvation and how we're going to receive it. What does he say? ". . . for it is the power of God unto salvation . . ." To whom? To the Jews only? Is that what Christ was saying before, when He said salvation is of the Jews? Did He mean that only the Jews have an opportunity for salvation in God's Kingdom? No. Paul clarifies, ". . . for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [or Gentile]."



To whom was salvation being offered? Only to Jews? Not at all. To the Jew first, but also to the Greek, or to those that were non-Israelites. Why? Because the sacrifice of Christ was not just for one group of people, one nation, one culture, one ideology. No, Christ died for the entire world. That promise to Abraham that all peoples of the earth would be blessed was a promise that Jesus Christ was going to come and die for the whole world; and that all who were given a call and an opportunity to know the real Christ, who accepted and acted upon that call, who respected the laws of God, who lived according to that way of life, who acted in faith throughout their time of judgment and trial on this earth, were going to have an opportunity to receive the blessings of those promises—spiritual life eternal in the God-family, whether one physically was an Israelite or a Gentile. It is according to whom God calls, and He has called peoples out of most walks of life around this earth.

Romans 2:28. Who is Christ really talking about as a Jew? Are we talking about the physical descendants? Not at all. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly . . ." Paul is saying you're not really a Jew just because you're born with the DNA of a descendant of Judah in the flesh. No, that's not what we're talking about. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh." Circumcision was one of the rites, one of the requirements, that set the people of Israel apart from the rest of the world and made them unique, even as the Sabbath did. The weekly and annual Sabbaths were the sign between God and His people. It set them apart from all the other nations on the earth, and so did circumcision. It was a physical rite—a ritual, a requirement—that also made a distinction between the Israelites and all other nations. But Paul is now talking about what the spiritual aspects of that separation and distinction are like between the people of God and the people of the world.

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

What are we speaking of? We're talking about spiritual Israel. Salvation is of the Jews, but that salvation was through the Jew who was named Jesus Christ. It is through belief on Christ and the obedience to His laws, being baptized after receiving a call, receiving the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, that we have the opportunity to become a spiritual Jew—no matter what our background or history in the flesh is, no matter what nation or what continent we come from. Those whom God calls and to whom He provides that opportunity—who accept that call, who respond by becoming

baptized, who receive the down payment of the Holy Spirit—are made a part of the very Body of Christ. What is that Body? The Church. And what is that Church? It is spiritual Israel.

So there is a type, and there's an antitype. The nation of Israel that God worked with through all of those centuries looked forward to and pictured the very Church, the Body of Christ that was going to be raised up after His death, burial and resurrection—the opportunity to build a spiritual nation of those who would receive the Holy Spirit. That, my dear brethren, is the fulfillment of that which God promised to Abraham, the way that all nations on the earth would be blessed through a descendant of Abraham. That descendant was Jesus Christ. The most important aspect of that covenant promise was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:10:

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

He's speaking to the very Jews who were responsible—even though they were God's called and chosen people of the flesh—for killing the very Messiah that God had promised would come out of Abraham. He's bringing that to their attention, and many of them are being called and converted at this time to accept the responsibility for what they did and to embrace the Truth. "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders . . ." Christ was rejected of His own people. He came to sacrifice Himself willingly. They did not respect it at all, and they crucified Him.

. . . which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Only through Christ can salvation come. Now, is that contradictory to what Christ said before, when He said salvation is of the Jews? Not if you understand what a real Jew is. Salvation is only through Christ, and those who become a part of the very Body of Jesus Christ have an opportunity for salvation. That means, then, that those who

are made a part of the Body of Christ are really becoming a spiritual Jew, a spiritual Israelite, because salvation is only through the Jews. It is only through the very descendant of Judah, Jesus Christ.

So that's a synopsis of the Scepter promise that was given. It is the second and most important part of that promise that was given to Abraham, reconfirmed in Isaac, reconfirmed again, then, in Jacob whose name was changed to Israel.

What about the first part? What about the Birthright promises? I will quote that part from our fundamental of belief again: "That our white, English-speaking peoples of today are enjoying the national phases of the promises—that of MATERIAL blessings—called the 'Birthright,' which was handed down thru the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, whose descendants we are . . ." With this, we're going to have quite a lot of material to cover, because this is the part that most of the world does not accept. Most of those who call themselves Christians absolutely reject this truth. They believe that the lost ten tribes are truly lost, or else, really, that the descendants of those ten tribes of Israel came back with Judah, Benjamin, and the Levites who came back out of captivity and repopulated the Holy Land. So they think there is a representation of all twelve tribes of Israel in what is called today the nation of Israel and the Jews. They reject the very idea that there are ten lost tribes that never did find their way back home, that God dispersed them intentionally, and that those people have been blessed and promoted by God and given incredible worldwide wealth and material blessings. They reject those things, but we're going to show you the very passages from the Bible that certify that there was a difference between the promises given to Judah and those that were given to another son.

1 Chronicles 5:2. Here is the clearest delineation for the separation in those two promises. If you remember, I stated in the first sermon that there are a number of men—even some of our Founding Fathers, even certain men like Thomas Paine—who ultimately repudiated the Bible, and the authority of the Bible, as a fable. Why? Because they never saw the great promises of national wealth and material blessings manifested in the Jews. They knew those promises that God had made, and they looked and said, "Well, look at the Jews. They're a dispersed, persecuted people, divided into all of these different nations. They've never been great, wealthy or powerful, yet God promised that His people were going to be blessed above all nations on the earth. They were going to be great in number; they were going to be given all of this wealth and power." So, men looked at it and said that if God had fulfilled His promise, if it was really true and not just a fable, then we should see that fulfilled in the Jewish people, and they say, "But look at the Jews. The Bible can't be true."

That's why Mr. Armstrong called this very piece of knowledge the master key to understanding prophecy in the Bible. Because when you understand how God has fulfilled His promise of the Birthright gifts and the promotion of the descendants of Israel through Joseph—not through Judah—then you begin to see how God has actually carried forward and fulfilled those prophecies through time, even in these last days. That's why it's important, brethren.

1 Chronicles 5:2:

For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler;  
but the birthright was Joseph's.

Right there is the distinction between the Scepter—the kingly line that would ultimately produce Christ—and the Birthright promises that were going to go to a different son through a totally different line. It was not through Judah that the Birthright promises were going to go at all. They certainly have not manifested great power as a nation on the earth.

Notice also, brethren, that since birthright means "the right of birth," eternal life cannot come through the Birthright. Why? Because God has promised no human being a right of eternal life just by his birth. No one has received the right of eternal life just by being born into a particular family within a particular nation. Not at all. So there is a difference between those who will qualify for eternal life through truly accepting Jesus Christ, versus the fulfillment of the physical, material blessings of the Birthright of Israel.

What was promised in the Birthright? Let's go back to Genesis 35:9, just to rehearse very quickly before we get into it. We're not talking about the Scepter promises of the one seed in Christ where all nations will be blessed, but just the Birthright portion of the promises. What was it? "And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him." So, here, God is about to reconfirm with Jacob the same covenant promises that He had confirmed with Isaac and, originally, with his grandfather Abraham.

And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called  
any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name . . .

So, here, God specifically changed his name. From then on, his name was Israel.

. . . and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply [Now, here is the promise given to Jacob who became Israel.]; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give [What? Eternal life? The promise of Christ? No.] the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

Was this portion of the promise spiritual? Was this the promise of all nations being blessed upon the earth through the coming of Jesus Christ? No. This was literally a restricted, physical promise of blessing to certain physical descendants of Jacob who became Israel. It was a promise of material things—land.

Now notice Genesis 22:16. We just read this, but let's go back and rehearse it one more time.

And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven . . .

Has it been the Jewish nation—the people that are now called Israel over in the Middle East—that have been blessed that way, producing children as the stars of heaven spread out across the earth? Not at all.

. . . in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

Have the Jews in modern times ever possessed the strategic sea gates? Have they ever been a sea power or a land power on the face of the earth? Not at all. Yet whoever was going to receive this very specific unconditional promise by God as a descendant of Abraham, was going to be a world power—a nation and a company of nations.

You know the story. I'm not telling you a new story that you haven't read in Mr. Armstrong's book *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, so you know how it ends. Who else in modern times even begins to resemble that which God promised would occur—a nation and a company of nations who would possess the very

gates of their enemies? Who is that company of nations? The company of nations is the British Commonwealth, and that one great nation is the United States, the descendants of Manasseh. The descendants of Britain are those that came from Ephraim.

Together, the Commonwealth of Britain and the United States have controlled the most strategic places in the world—all of the sea gates at their heyday. Now we've been giving them away, slowly but surely. Just a few years ago, we gave away the Panama Canal; and Britain has continued to divest itself of its holdings around the world. We have given in and become critical of ourselves by all that has been said about our imperial advancement and oppression of other nations. Yet those nations that were dominated by the United States and the British Commonwealth, were blessed incredibly during those times. And when they pulled out, what has history shown? They never continued to be blessed. They disintegrated; they went downhill. Why? Because there were better people in the nations of Britain and the United States? No. They were receiving continually the Birthright promises of God—the continuation of the very promises to Abraham. The things they did were blessed in advance, even though they were not worthy of God's blessings at all. There was a fulfillment, brethren. We need not doubt that God fulfilled His promises and that the Bible is true, because we have seen in the very last days, in the last two hundred years since the birth of this nation, the very fulfillment of a big part of those promises.

What should have happened to Jacob's first-born son, if everything went according to the physical guidelines and rules? Who should have received the Birthright promises? Should it not have been the first-born son of Jacob? That would be the assumption, wouldn't it? Who was the first-born son of Jacob? It was Reuben. Now, wait a minute, we don't hear anything about the Birthright promises going to Reuben, and why is that? Well, let's read.

1 Chronicles 5:1:

Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel . . .

What are we talking about? We won't take the time, but you can turn to Genesis 35:22 where it gives a short synopsis of Reuben who actually engaged in an illicit relationship with one of Jacob's concubines. It was considered such a heinous act of

disrespect and perversion that the right of the Birthright promises was stripped from him, even though he was the first-born son. He lost his right, even as Esau lost his right to the Birthright promises.

It's very, very interesting to me how God has worked to fulfill His will contrary to the way human beings think it should work. Abraham had a first-born son, Ishmael, and desperately wanted God to accept him; and God said, "No, those covenant promises are going to be fulfilled in Isaac, not in Ishmael." Then Isaac had two sons, and Esau was the oldest and should have had the Birthright promises; yet God had determined long in advance that He was going to promote the younger—the second born, Jacob—above his older brother, Esau. Jacob and his mother, Rebecca, became involved in subterfuge in order to gain it. They didn't wait for God who would have fulfilled it anyway. Jacob had to pay a lot of penalties because he didn't wait. God had determined that He was going to give those Birthright promises through Jacob, and not through Esau. So now we find that the first-born son of Jacob, Reuben, should have received it, but it was stripped from him.

God chooses through whom He is going to fulfill His promises and how He is going to work. It is rarely the way human beings think or predict it's going to happen. I can't think of any better demonstration of the power of God to perform His will, and not the will of man, than in the very way that you've seen, and that we see in the Bible, all of these promises of the covenant passed down through different descendants of Abraham. It wasn't through Ishmael; it was through Isaac. It wasn't through Esau; it was Jacob. It wasn't Reuben; it was Joseph.

Joseph was the first-born son of Rachel, not Leah. In an old article that Mr. Armstrong wrote on polygamy, he demonstrated that the men who were involved in polygamous relationships were never blessed. Those were always relationships that were a curse, because they were never intended by God. In fact, at the very time that God confirmed His covenant with Jacob and changed his name to Israel, the very first thing that happened thereafter was that the second wife, who was not really legitimate, died in childbirth. From that time on, as Mr. Armstrong said, there's no evidence that Jacob ever took additional wives or continued that practice once he made that covenant with God. It was not God's will. But it's interesting that God has chosen to continue His promises through lines of men who, in the flesh, were not worthy at all—even the son of the wife who was not really Jacob's legitimate wife. Rachel was the one he loved the most, yes, but she wasn't really his legitimate wife; yet it was through her son Joseph that those Birthright promises were going to continue.

Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's.

So, basically, God took away everything from Reuben who should have been the one to receive both parts of the blessing. He should have received, by human reasoning, the Birthright promises of physical wealth, as well as the Scepter promises. Yet God is the One that determined and said, "No, the Scepter promises are going to go through Judah, and the Birthright promises of national wealth and power are going to go through Joseph."

Genesis 48:1:

And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

So, here, we see that Joseph had two sons, likely by an Egyptian wife because these were sons that were born in Egypt during the time that he was promoted by Pharaoh to the second position in power underneath him. In his separation from his brethren, he had a family. He had two sons; the oldest was Manasseh, and the youngest was Ephraim. And here, something very, very interesting occurs. Jacob, who is now called Israel, is very old and sick; and he's basically dying on his deathbed. Something special is going to happen.

. . . he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. [Notice the oldest is listed first in order.] And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. [God strengthened him to allow him to be able to sit up.] And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, And said unto me [Jacob is retelling Joseph the content of this blessing that God had given to him.], Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.



Notice, nothing is said in this promise about the one seed, Jesus Christ. That was a separate part of the promise—the promise of grace. Here, Jacob is not speaking of that portion of the covenant promise to Abraham. He's speaking only of that physical portion—the race promise.

Verse 5: "And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh . . ." Notice, Jacob has already referred to them, not in the order of birth, the oldest being Manasseh; but he's referred to the younger first. Why did he do that? We're going to find out.

And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

Do you realize what's happening here? At this very point in time, Jacob, who became Israel, adopted his grandsons and made them sons—sons who were born in Egypt to Joseph and who would not have had the rights, naturally, that would have been bestowed upon the twelve sons. Yet, here, because of God's specific will, Israel adopts these two particular grandsons. He had many grandsons; but he adopts Ephraim and Manasseh as his own sons, and he says, "And now thy two sons . . . are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine." What does this mean? Ephraim and Manasseh were going to share equally in the promises with Jacob's own direct sons. They weren't going to receive promises as grandsons, like all of the other dozens of grandsons; they were going to receive promises equal with the very sons of Israel. What effect did that have? Jacob had twelve sons, from which we get the twelve tribes of Israel. By making Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, equal sons of Israel, we end up with thirteen—thirteen sons that were given portions of the wealth of Israel, of those blessings.

As we know, ultimately, when God made them a nation and they went into the Promised Land, there wasn't land allotted to Levi, one of those twelve sons. Remember, they were the priests; they were to serve in the priestly offices, and God did not give them a physical heritage of land like all of the other tribes received. But Ephraim and Manasseh each received a full portion as a son of Israel, as one of the tribes—which means that Joseph, as a single son, received a double portion, because his two sons received equally along with the other brothers of Joseph. There were still twelve parcels, twelve regions of the Promised Land that were divided up. Levi did not receive a portion, because they had specific cities in all of those tribal lands. Yet there were twelve, and Ephraim and Manasseh each got one. That's how it was divided up.

Ephraim and Manasseh were given direct rights as tribes of Israel—a double portion for Joseph. That's how much God thought of Joseph because of his faithfulness, because of what he had accomplished in his life to obey God. So his sons were blessed to be treated as sons of his father. To these two sons and their descendants were to pass the Birthright promises. Notice what happens as we continue on. Genesis 48:8: "And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these?" So, now, he's on his deathbed, but God has strengthened him to sit up in order to make this final blessing upon these two lads.

And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

He is hearkening back to the treachery of Joseph's brothers who had thrown him into a pit, waited for a caravan to come by, and sold him into slavery. Joseph was taken as a slave into Egypt and ultimately thrown into prison. Yet God miraculously intervened and advanced him through his ability to interpret dreams, and Joseph became the second most powerful man in the nation of Egypt, which was the greatest nation on the face of the earth at the time. Then Joseph was responsible for helping to save his family—including those brothers who had treacherously sold him—from that famine that God had carried out in the land. He was responsible for Israel and all of those descendants coming down into the land of Egypt where God was going to make a great nation out of them for purpose. So Israel is hearkening back.

And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face [No, he thought he was dead. For years, he thought that Joseph, his favorite son, was dead.]: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

Israel, on his deathbed, is reflecting on how blessed he was, not only that his favorite son, Joseph, had been saved and promoted so much by God, but also that he had an opportunity to see Joseph's sons.

And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand

toward Israel's right hand . . .

Why is he doing this? Joseph knows that his eldest, Manasseh, is the one who should be under the right hand of Israel when these blessings are given, because he's the oldest. He should get the greater portion of the blessing. So Joseph takes Manasseh in his left hand and pushes him to what should be Israel's right hand; and he takes Ephraim, the younger, on his right and pushes him to Israel's left hand, but what's going to happen?

. . . and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger . . .

He crossed his hands. According to human wisdom, he should have just put his hand out to the son whom Joseph had guided under his right hand, who was the oldest, Manasseh. Instead, for some reason, Israel, who is a blind man and can't see, reaches over with his right hand and puts it on the younger son who is on his left.

. . . and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly . . .

This tells you that Jacob wasn't just doing this by accident or mistake. He knew exactly what he was doing, and he was doing it for a reason.

. . . for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph [First, the blessing comes to Joseph and to both of the sons together.] and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads [Here's a joint blessing upon both of them simultaneously.]; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

Here was, in essence, the legal adoption blessing; he adopted Ephraim and Manasseh as his very own sons that they might receive full portions as sons of Israel.

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his

father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son [He's saying, "Joseph, I know exactly what I'm doing."], I know it: he also shall become a people . . .

Oh, yes, Manasseh, the firstborn, was going to be a great nation.

. . . he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

Remember, we already saw the original promise reconfirmed to Jacob—a nation and a company of nations would come out of him. Here, we're finding out specifically, then, how God is going to fulfill that promise of a nation and a company of nations. The company of nations was going to come out of Ephraim, and the one great nation was going to come out of the descendants of Manasseh.

And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

The greater portion of the Birthright promise was given to the younger brother. From that time forward, the name of Ephraim was put before Manasseh. Again, God is showing that His will is done. He determines the order, regardless of birth, of how He will fulfill His will.

The Birthright was not to go to all twelve tribes equally; and, especially, it was not to go to Judah. No, the Scepter promises of the kings, the royal line, and the birth of Christ were going to be through Judah. The Birthright promises of wealth, national strength and power were going to go through Joseph to Ephraim as a company of nations—a multitude of nations—and to Manasseh who was also going to be a single great nation.

Now let's read what Jacob said thereafter in a prophecy for all of his sons. We're going to pick out specifically the prophecy that he quoted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that was going to befall Judah and Joseph.

First, Genesis 49:1, we read:

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

What is Jacob getting ready to say? He's getting ready to speak by the authority of the Holy Spirit about that which was going to occur in the days before the second coming of Jesus Christ—thousands of years down the line from the time that he was now speaking this prophecy.

... that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

What did he say to Judah? What was the prophecy specifically concerning Judah? Skip down to verse 8:

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. 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? [Oh, yes, he was going to have power. He was going to be a royal line.] The sceptre shall not depart from Judah [There was the promise of God.], nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

What "gathering of the people?" The gathering that was going to occur through the fulfillment of Jesus Christ as Savior who ultimately, at His second coming, is going to gather all nations together under His perfect government. That's going to happen through that single throne, that kingly line that was promised through Judah, that dynasty that was absolutely fulfilled through all of the Biblical record. There was one, and only one, dynasty in Judah—the Davidic dynasty from which Jesus Christ was born.

What about the promise to Joseph? Genesis 49:22: "Joseph is a fruitful bough..." What was the promise to Joseph? Not kingship, no, but he was going to be incredibly blessed with growth and wealth. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall." What does that refer to? This tells you that the expanse of the influence of those nations of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh, that company of nations and that great nation—were going to finger out around the world.

The blessings that God would grant to the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh were going to be felt around the world. "...whose branches run over the wall." That means they're not controlled; they just continue to seek out and expand their influence.

The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee . . .

Yes, they were going to be helped. Why, because they were deserving? No, these were the worst idolatrous people, as it would turn out, of anyone that came out of the loins of Jacob. The ones of Ephraim and Manasseh were less deserving than any others. They were idolaters, calf worshipers. They adopted every evil practice out of the surrounding nations. That's why God sent them all into captivity, and they lost their identity. They never did keep the Sabbath appropriately from the time of the reign of Jeroboam forward. Not at all. They set up all manner of counterfeit concepts and beliefs; yet, because of the faithfulness of Abraham, God still fulfilled the Birthright promises in those people.

Here you have all of these people in our country today, especially in the wake of the attacks on September the 11th, who claim by inherent right the blessings of God as if they earned them, as if they are better as a people, as if we are more deserving than anyone else on the earth to have good things, peace, and prosperity—as if we deserved it. We don't deserve it. We have it only, brethren, because God is fulfilling, and has fulfilled, His promise to Abraham—the Birthright promises that have passed down through the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.

Oh, yes, they were going to have many, many children; and they were going to expand and grow and cover many parts of the earth.

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

And he again became separate from his brethren, because those tribes were separated from Judah and taken into captivity by the Assyrians, as we'll go through and see next time. They spread about and lost their identity. Why did they lose their identity? Because they quit keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days, which was the sign between God and His people. When they quit keeping the Sabbath, when they perverted it and adopted all of these pagan practices, they lost their identity. They even forgot who they were. They lost their language; they lost everything that identified them as Israel. Today, all of those who are the true descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, deny who they are. They absolutely think they're Gentiles. That was also part of the prophecy. We're going to see those as well.

None of these promises that Jacob spoke to Joseph as a prophecy of the last days were ever fulfilled in the Jews. You do not see the Jews being advanced. You do not see them being a great nation as vines running over the wall. You do not see them being strengthened as a powerful nation. They are only powerful, why? Why did they even continue to exist in the midst of all of those countries in the Middle East that hate them? Because they're being supported by the United States. They are fighting, and they are armed to the teeth with United States-made weapons and funding. That's why they're advanced. They are benefiting secondarily from the Birthright promises because of the support that is coming from Ephraim and Manasseh.

Next time, brethren, we're going to get into the specific Davidic covenant—the covenant that God made with David. We're going to talk about Christ's throne, the importance of that throne that He is going to assume when He returns, and some more of the details of the Biblical history of Israel and those things that happened after Israel came into the Promised Land. Next time.