

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXIV

March 30, 2014

No. 13

Abraham: Father of Nations

(Jerry Fite)

God made a promise to Abram which changed his name. “...thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee” (Genesis 17:5). So Abram (exalted father) became Abraham (father of a multitude) due to this promise.

In the Book of Genesis this promise begins fulfillment. Abram’s son Ishmael of Hagar would through twelve princes become a nation known as the *Ishmaelites* (Genesis 17:20). After Sarah’s death, Abraham married Keturah and fathered six sons. One of these sons was *Midian* who became the nation of the *Midianites* (Genesis 25:2). Later the Ishmaelites and the Midianites would work closely together when Joseph was sold into slavery (Genesis 37:25-28). Abraham’s grandson, Esau became the nation of the *Edomites* who dwelt in Mount Seir (Genesis 36:9).

In addition to these nations, Abraham would be the father of the nation of Israel through Isaac and Jacob. Israel became a great nation even when they were still in Egypt (Deuteronomy 26:5). The twelve tribes of Israel comprised a nation who did inher-

it the land promised to them (Joshua 21:43).

Some have reasoned that Abraham became the Father of other nations such as Britain and the United States. The theory is based upon the ten northern tribes of Israel being lost after they were taken into Assyrian Captivity in 722 B.C.

Joseph Smith in the 1830’s taught the “restoration of the ten tribes” in America as Jesus would rule in his kingdom. He believed the Book of Mormon was a tool to restore the ten tribes. As early as 1650 the view that Indians in America might be of Jewish descent was propagated through such works of Thomas Thorowgood: *Jewes in America, or, Probabilities that the Americans or of that race*. Herbert Armstrong, the founder of the World Wide Church of God, made the doctrine of the ten lost tribes popular throughout America in the middle to late 20th century. He believed the ten lost tribes migrated to Western Europe and fostered the Anglo-Saxons who then migrated to America. He believed he was calling them back to God through His preaching and teaching.

The problem with these theories is that the basis of the ten tribes of Israel ever being lost is unscriptural. After Judah was restored back to their land in Jerusalem, we notice the northern tribes of Israel were among them: “*And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh*” (I Chron. 9:3)

In the New Testament we observe that the aged Anna the prophetess was of the tribe of “*Asher*”, a northern tribe (Luke 2:36). Paul speaks of the hope for which “*our twelve tribes*” earnestly serve God (Acts 26:6-8). James writes his letter, greeting “*the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion*” (James 1:1). If the ten tribes were ever lost, the Holy Spirit did not know it.

Abraham being the father of nations has a more important fulfillment. Being justified by faith apart from the Law of Moses was expressed in Abraham who is the Father of us all who have such faith (Romans 4:16). Paul adds, “*as it is written, a father of many nations have I made thee*” (Romans 14:17). In Christ, we are Abraham’s seed (Galatians 3:29).