

## Comments about the book Israel in Bible Prophecy by John L. Bray

By Lloyd Dale)

The cause of the first man to speak always seems just until another comes to examine him. (Proverbs 18:17 paraphrased)

### QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, AND COMMENTARY ABOUT THE BOOK:

Let us remember that **Abraham was not a “Jew” (nor an “Israelite”)** as such when God called him and gave him a covenant of promises. God’s (Yahweh’s) pledge of blessings to him and his descendant came long before Israel was ever known as a nation. God used the Israelites to carry out His plan which He had promised to and through Abraham. (I in B P p.10)

John is fond of making statements like the following: “This is another example of how folks can put forth speculative theories by making statements which the Bible does not say at all.” (I in B P page 19) And yet he does not see that he often does this himself in this book. The following material will identify some of these times.

One day I dug out John Bray’s book Morgan Edwards and the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching and re-read it. Later as I was sitting pondering a very great question that is on my mind a great deal these days (actually has been on my mind much over the past 6 years), The Spirit brought to my mind a portion of a paragraph that I had read in John’s book. That passage is found on page 11, I quote:

We need Christian honesty, integrity, and truthfulness from our friends. It has been bothersome to me that Christian leaders would try to pass off what they have sent me as legitimate teaching about a pre-tribulation rapture. They have not done their homework, they have not done sufficient research, they have not found what they say they have found, and they keep right on copying from others as to what they have said instead of getting the original sources themselves. It is reprehensible. And one of their main problems is that they give their own interpretations to what they have found instead of allowing the writers to say what they believe. If not this, they take someone else’s interpretation of what was said, and go by that.

What John has stated above is exactly the way I feel about persons that send me materials about **the history and eschatology of Israel.**

I could list many examples of this, but in this particular case, I make reference to John's book Israel In Bible Prophecy.

On page 1, while discussing Jesus' "...ministry among His fleshly people Israel..." John states, "Jesus said in two places (Matt.23:38 & Luke 13:35) 'behold your **house** is left unto you desolate'." Actually Jesus only said this once, however, His statement was recorded twice. The real question is - which **house** was Jesus speaking of in these two passages. John thinks that it was the temple, however, the temple was the house of Yahweh (Mark 11:17, et al.) not the house of Israel or Judah.

The Old Testament establishes that the 12 tribed nation of Israel became two kingdoms after the death of Solomon (1 Kings 11) which were referred to as two houses by Scripture writers. These two houses were the house of Israel - the northern kingdom- and the house of Judah - the southern kingdom. The Bible also dramatically states that after the fall of Samaria (capital city of the northern kingdom) to the Assyrians in c. 721 BC the northern kingdom had been brought to a violent end and its people deported into Assyrian captivity (Diaspora) "there was none left but the tribe of Judah, i. e the house of Judah (2 Kings 17:18-23).

We have been completely unable to find any Biblical passage where any of the people of the house of Israel ever returned to the land. Therefore, we submit that the "house" Jesus was referring to in the above statement was the house of Judah. The house that was to be left desolate was the house of Judah, the southern kingdom of the nation of Israel. (This has been carefully document in other works by this author) This desolation would incorporate the destruction of their city of Jerusalem and the temple of Yahweh within the city.

The people of the house of Judah became known as Judahites (Jews) because they lived within the land grant given by Yahweh through Joshua to the tribe of Judah. This may seem like a small detail, but I assure you **it is an extremely important**, although usually overlooked, **detail for the proper understanding of the Bible and Bible prophecy!**

**The facts are that Israel was dispersed into the Assyrian empire between the years 735 and 721 BC. 2Kings 19 & 20 (see 20:6) makes it very clear that only Jerusalem and the people who lived in it were left in the land after the last of the Assyrian invasions. Many years later, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and the people, Judahites (Jews), taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. However, Yahweh had promised them, and only them, that they would be permitted to return after a 70 year disciplinary captivity.**

Also from page 1, para.2, while discussing the judgment Jesus Christ pronounced upon the first century Jews, John states, "this process of Judgment (upon the Jews) continues into modern History"? Does John really believe that 21st century Jews are being judged for the things the first century Jews did, especially when he makes the point that many, if not most, of the modern Jews are not descendants of Abraham (page 34ff), thus not descendants of first century Jews? What is the Biblical basis for such an elongated

judgment that was pronounced upon “this generation” of the first century? John provides no basis for his assertion.

We will not go into it in depth at this time, but we think that John’s understanding of the Abrahamic covenant as presented on pages 8 & 9 is faulty on several points. For instance on page 8 he states, “Read carefully Leviticus 26:40-42 and note the **CONDITIONAL** aspects of the **ABRAHAMIC** covenant. Paul, the apostle clearly states that “the law (Leviticus) was added 432 years after (the Abrahamic covenant) and **cannot disannul**, that it should make the promise of none effect (Gal. 3:17). In our considered opinion, Paul here states that **the promises of the Abrahamic covenant were unconditional and therefore could not be annulled.**

We respectfully submit for consideration that Leviticus does not and indeed cannot demonstrate any conditional aspects of the Abrahamic covenant because it [Leviticus] is an addition to the Abrahamic covenant, it is not the Abrahamic covenant (which was **clearly unconditional to Abraham and his seed** [singular]), it is the Mosaic or Sinatic portion of the Abrahamic covenant which was added 432 years after Yahweh gave His unconditional covenant to Abraham (Gal. 3:17). It is true that the Mosaic portion of the covenant was conditional and it is true that individuals within the covenant could break the covenant and be “cut off” from Israel.

Additionally, Lev.26:44 states, “And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them, utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am Yahweh their God.” This is unequivocal evidence the even in light of the sins of Israel, Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob [vs.42] was unbreakable, i.e. non-revocable, on Yahweh’s part, **THAT IS TO MEAN UNCONDITIONAL.**

John goes to some length in his attempt to establish that Yahweh’s covenants were conditional; in this he is partly right. **Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham was unconditional, however, not all descendants of Abraham were unconditionally included in the covenant and all within the covenant would be “cut off”** (Rom.3:9-19, 23; Gal.3:22) **from Israel because of sin except for Jesus Christ the eldest son and true seed of the covenant.** The latter part of the preceding statement is actually what John has established.

On page 9 John states, “(This word could not mean eternal anyway, as II Peter 3:10-12 and Rev. 20:11, 21:1 tell us that this present earth will some day be destroyed).” In light of his book Matthew 24 fulfilled we think you will now recognize that this statement is not accurate. Paul states it well in Eph.3:21, “...throughout all ages, world without end.”

Does John still believe that 2Peter 3:10-12 & Rev. 20:11, 21:1 teach that “this present earth will some day be destroyed? In light of his more recent work, probably not, but he hasn’t revised this statement.

On page 14 John states, “Most of the prophecies dealing with the dispossession of the land from Israel, their dispersion and captivity, related to the time they were carried off to Babylon and the seventy years they were there.” This statement is extremely misleading if not patently false. In the first place John’s “Israel” had become **two kingdoms** by the time of post-Mosaic prophets. The prophecy of Hosea was given to the northern

kingdom, the house of Israel, and *had nothing to do with the Babylonian captivity*. This is also true of Amos and parts of Isaiah and others. Hosea dealt “with the dispossession of the land from Israel.” Israel, the northern kingdom was genuinely **dispossessed** of their land as a result of the fact that Yahweh divorced them (Jer.3:8, Hosea) according to the law (Deut.24:1), and put them out of the land into the Assyrian captivity (Exile/Diaspora) c. 721 BC.

The house of Judah (Jew) was not dispossessed of the land while they were in Babylon as they were given a promise of a return to the land after seventy years. Their removal from the land during the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity was disciplinary and remedial **not dispossessional**. Judah (the Jew) was not dispossessed of the land until the destruction of Judaea, Jerusalem, and the temple by the Romans and others in 70 AD. *From this dispersal there was no promise of a return!* Thus the Jews were dispossessed from the land. Much more could and should be said about this, but this will have to suffice for now.

On pages 15, 16, 17, John discusses the two kingdoms that came into existence following Solomon’s death. On page 16 John writes, “These two dispersions made up the dispersion of the northern kingdom.” There were at least four invasions (not just two) into Israel by the Assyrians, and when they were finished all Israel was gone into the Diaspora (2 Kings 17:18).

Also on page 16 John writes about the Babylonian captivity and states of the c. 598 invasion into Judaea that “Ezekiel was taken at this time.” Where does John get this notion? The fact is that the Bible does not tell us when Ezekiel went into captivity nor does it tell us which captivity (Assyrian or Babylonian) he was in. The above appears to be an invalid assumption; at the least it is an unsupported assumption.

John does not furnish any Biblical or other documentation for his statement that “Ezekiel was taken” from Jerusalem to Babylon in 598 or 597 BC? We have been unable to find any primary source documentation for this statement. It appears from the text of Ezekiel (esp. ch. 3:4,5,7,11,17; 4:3,13; 11:15-16; 39:22; 40:4; et al.) that he was among the house of Israel captives, as the text repeatedly states in various ways that **Ezekiel was a prophet to the house of Israel - the people of the Assyrian Diaspora!**

On page 17, par.7 John states, “the northern kingdom ...was carried into Assyria, and assimilated into the land”. He does not furnish any Biblical or other documentation to support this statement? While it would be possible for one people to be “assimilated” into another people group, but not in the brief time of 100 years, and it is not possible for a people to be “assimilated into the land”.

Where in Jer.30:1-11 does he find the “detail” of the Jews returning from Babylon to Jerusalem after 70 years? Could the reference be 29:1-11?

On page 20 John states, “that finished their (the northern) kingdom for ever.” Does the “end of the kingdom of Israel” (page 20, para.7) necessitate the end of the people that formerly lived in the kingdom? Obviously not! (The house of) Israel had been gone into the Assyrian captivity for over a hundred (100) years when Ezekiel began to prophesy. Yet Ezekiel repeatedly states that he is a prophet to the house of Israel (3:4, 5, 7, 17; 4:3 & 4; etc.), the only way he could do that would be to be among the Assyrian captives.

Hosea states for Yahweh, ‘I...will cause to cease the **kingdom of the house of Israel**’ (Ho.1:4) but just 6 verses later Hosea states for Yahweh, “Yet the number of the children of Israel (the northern kingdom) shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered: and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place (land) where it was said unto them, you are not my people (Lo-ammi, vs. 9) *there* it shall be said unto them, *you are* the sons of Yahweh. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head and they shall come up out of the earth: for great *shall be* the day of Jezreel (harvest).” (Ho 1:9-11; see also 6:11)

The above cannot be a reference to any alleged return after the Babylonian captivity because the Jews that returned to the land at that time were not called the sons of Yahweh. This did not happen until salvation came to Jacob through the Messiah during the first century (John 1:12; Romans 8:14, 19; 9:25-26; Philippians 2:15; 1 John 3:1-2; 1Pet.2:10).

The word “Jezreel” is a Hebrew agricultural word that can include everything from the planting (sowing) through the harvest. In Hosea 1:5 and Amos 9:9 et al, Yahweh describes the planting or sowing of the house of Israel among or to the nations (Gentiles): while in Hosea 1:11 et al He describes the Harvest in the Messiah not some alleged return of the 12 tribes to the Promised Land after the Babylonian captivity. (I in B P; p. 21, para.3)

From page 20, para.7, he again states of the northern kingdom, that “most of them (house of Israel) were assimilated with the people of Assyria. But he still does not furnish any Biblical prophecy of, statement after the fact, or other primary documentation to support and/or establish that opinion? **As demonstrated above they were not assimilated into the people of Assyria at the time of Ezekiel.**

Also on page 20, para.7, John states, “(b)efore the northern group ever were taken captive, God had promised through Jeremiah that some of them would return.” **How can this be?** Samaria, the capital city and last of the “northern group” to be captured by the Assyrians, fell in 722 or 721 BC. According to all the sources I have checked, Jeremiah did not begin his prophetic ministry until ca. 626 BC. If Jeremiah did not begin his prophetic ministry until ca. 95 years after Samaria fell to the Assyrians, then how could he have prophesied that some of the “northern group” would return “before the northern group ever were (sic) taken captive”?

Why did John attempt to explain “what is known to have happened to (the northern kingdom of Israel) and almost completely ignore the prophecies of **Hosea**, the chief prophet to the northern kingdom, **Amos** and major portions of **Ezekiel**?

On page 21 John cites Flavius Josephus. Just a few lines beyond the sentence he cited, Josephus wrote, “but then **the entire body of the people of (the house) of Israel remained in that country...all ten tribes** are beyond Euphrates until now (first century), and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers.” [Complete works of Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, Chapter V, para.2, 1978] If his premise is that “(t)he vast majority of them were assimilated with the people of Assyria...(s)ome of them, but only a representative number (as prophesied) returned with those of the southern kingdom” is true, what could Josephus have possibly meant by this statement?

Note also on page 21 John stated that “(s)ome of them but only a representative number (as prophesied) returned with those of the southern kingdom.” Again, he does not furnish

any documentation for that statement. There is no Biblical or extra-Biblical primary source that we have been able to find that would support that statement; therefore, we must conclude that it is false. This conclusion is supported by the fact that every ancient primary source that we have been able to find clearly states that **NO** members of the descendants of the northern tribes returned to the land with Judah. This is well documented in our book The Mystery of the Olive Tree.

Also on page 21, para.4, John cites Zech.8:13. Where in ch. 8 does he find any reference to Yahweh speaking “of bringing a remnant of both Judah and Israel back to Jerusalem”? Maybe in verse 23 where Jews and Gentiles are being saved; but if that is the re-gathering of the house of Israel (which it is), THEN JOHN HAS ADMITTED THAT HE IS WRONG AND WE ARE RIGHT. Verse 13 simply states that Yahweh “...will save...” “the house of Judah and the house of Israel.” Nothing is said about the house of Israel returning to the land. In fact verses 15 -23 make it very clear that Yahweh is addressing the house of Judah and that in the day of salvation (v.23) “...10 men... of the nations,...shall take hold... of a Jew, saying, we will go with you...” This happened in the first century when Paul and the other Jews preached salvation to the Gentiles.

Then in the last line of para.4 John commits a classic blunder when he states, “(a)fter that, they were know simply as the house of Israel.” As the entirety of this paper demonstrates, that is patently false.

If his premise that “a representative number (of the northern kingdom) returned with those of the southern kingdom” and that “the term ‘Jew’ represented all Israel, not just the southern tribes” is true, then why does Josephus, a Jew who lived in the first century AD, write that “**there are but two tribes** (Judah and Benjamin) **in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans**”? (ibid.)

In para.5 on page 21 John quotes parts of Romans 3:1-2, “...the Jew?...unto them were committed the oracles of God.” Then John states, “The oracles of God were given to **ALL** (emphasis in the original) of Israel, and Paul could just as easily said ‘Israel’ here as he did ‘Jews’...” This is simply not true. While it is true that all Israel received (“were given”) the oracles of God that is not what Paul is talking about here for he did not say they “were given” or received the oracles of God, he used the word “committed” and is thereby referencing Genesis 49:10 were in Jacob’s prophecy the preservation of the law (the oracles of God) was “committed” prophetically to the descendants of Judah, the Jews.

In para.6 John states, “(a) after Israelites and Jews returned to Palestine, the name “Israel” was used to refer to all members of the twelve tribes.” First of all, as this document establishes, John did not establish that any Israelites of the northern tribes returned to the Promised Land after the Babylonian captivity. Second, not initially, but eventually the remnant of Jews that did return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity may have begun to call themselves “Israel” but not because that term was “used to refer to all members of the twelve tribes” as John erroneously states, but because by that time the house of Judah (Jews) in Jerusalem were all that was left of the nation of Israel as Josephus confirms. The above applies to para.7-11 as well. In the Bible, the word Jew never refers to anyone or anything except the house of Judah. It is never used of, or to represent, all 12 tribes of Israel. **NEVER!!**

On page 22 he states, “James wrote to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” Are these “twelve tribes” the same people that Peter addressed as “the strangers (aliens) scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1Pet.1:1)? Of course they were! In the days of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires these areas were known as Halah, Habor, Hara, the river Gozan, and the cities of the Medes (2Ki.17:6; 1Chron.5:26). Therefore, both Peter and James were writing to descendants of the house of Israel which was **taken in the Assyrian captivity and placed (resettled) into these areas.**

In that same place on page 21 John states, “These were Christian Jews who had moved from Jerusalem,”... In that statement John seriously erred because Peter writes that the people “...scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” (1 Peter 1:1) were a people “Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy “. (1 Peter 2:10) When Peter wrote those words it would have been totally impossible to have described the Jews in such a manner. Peter here quotes Hosea who was a prophet to the northern tribes, and who were made Lo-Ammi (not a people) by Yahweh’s divorce decree given to the house of Israel by Hosea c. 780 BC -- **Not the Jews (Judahites) of the tribe of Judah** who were never divorced, but who would much later be stoned and burned (Rev.16:21 & 17:16) for their harlotry.

On page 22 of his book John quotes a paragraph from p. 120 of Philip Mauro’s book The Hope of Israel regarding the “ten tribes”.

Is Philip Mauro a primary or an original source? If not where is the primary or original source for his statement, “For it should be noted that in that land of their captivity Israel and Judah were conmingled (sic); and from that time onward the distinction between the ten tribes and the two no longer exists”?

If no “distinction between the ten tribes and the two no longer exists” after the Babylonian captivity as Mauro postulates, why does Haggai, who wrote c. 519 BC, well after the return, always refer to Judah when referring to the governor of the returnees [Haggai 1:1, 2:2 & 21] and why did Zechariah, a contemporary of Haggai, distinguish between the “house of Judah” and the house of Israel” in his prophecies [Zech.1:12, 8:13 & 19]? Finally, why does Josephus, writing c. 590 years later, consistently and repeatedly make just that distinction?

Mauro does not provide any documentation for his statement about the “conmingled” (sic) Israel and Judah? How can John possibly reconcile Mauro’s statement with the writings of Haggai, Zechariah, Josephus and others?

While it is true that Ezekiel was sent to ‘the children of Israel,’ to ‘the house of Israel,’ to ‘all the house of Israel,’ Mauro conveniently forgot to mention where the house of Israel was during the time of Ezekiel (i.e. in the Assyrian captivity). He also failed to mention that Ezekiel was sent to the house of Judah [Ez.4:4], that Ezekiel sat with “the elders of the house of Judah” [8:1], Yahweh spoke to Ezekiel about the house of Judah [8:17, 9:9, 21:20, 25:3,8,12, 27:17], and the house of Israel [40:4; 43:10] is still a separate entity from the house of Judah [48:7, 8, 22, & 31] as are each of the 12 tribes [48].

While it is true that Daniel “confessed for ‘all Israel’ and prayed for ‘all Israel’”, Mauro conveniently forgot to mention that Daniel was well aware that some were “near” and others were “far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them”. During Daniel’s time, the Bible makes it very clear that the northern kingdom people, the house of Israel, had been scattered “far off” “through all the countries” while the southern kingdom, house of Judah (Jews) were “near” mostly in the city of Babylon, with some being carried to the land of the Medes after the fall of Babylon.

Job confessed and made offerings [Job 1:5] for his whole family, but none have imagined that Job **was the whole family** as they have with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin that returned from the Babylonian captivity! While it is true that the returnees from Babylon were referred to as “all Israel” by Ezra, he knew full well that “the all Israel” he referred to was only **all of Israel that had returned from Babylon**. Ezra definitely knew that thousands (if not millions) of Israelites had not returned to Jerusalem and Judaea from captivity as he clearly states in 8:25, “All Israel *there* present”. **While it is true that Ezra “offered burnt offerings” for “all Israel”, it is equally true that Ezra knew full well that all Israel was not present in Judaea at that time.**

If as Mauro states “the distinction between the ten tribes and the two no longer exists...from the time of the (Babylonian) captivity onward”, then that would also mean that there is no longer any distinction between any of the tribes from that time onward. However, Mauro clearly points out that such a distinction still existed in New Testament times and thus argues directly against his own thesis.

If Mauro’s thesis is correct, why do both Ezra and Nehemiah refer so many times to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin but never do they mention any of the northern tribes? In 4:16 Nehemiah even refers to “the house of Judah”. If “no distinction exists” between the house of Judah and the house of Israel during this post exilic period, why does he do that?

Mauro’s case also fails when examined in light of the post exilic prophets as all of them, with the exception of Habakkuk, refer to the tribe of Judah. In 8:13, 15, & 19 Zechariah draws a clear distinction between the house of Judah” and “the house of Israel”, in 9:13 he makes a clear distinction between (the house of) Judah and Ephraim (another clear reference to the house of Israel, Ez.37:19), and in 10:6 he draws the same distinction between the “house of Judah” and “the house of Joseph” (aka the house of Israel, Ez.37:19)!

Again I Ask, where are Mauro’s “original sources”? He seems to have a very selective style, quoting passages that he thinks supports his thesis and completely ignoring the passages that prove him wrong.

On the same page John also quotes Albert Barnes Commentary on Isaiah, vol.1 p. 236-237. What original sources does Barnes quote? Where are these sources? The arguments which we have made against Mauro’s thesis, which we are forced to conclude is false and unproven, apply equally to Barnes’ unsupported statement.

Please examine very carefully the following Josephus references: (please note that Josephus scrupulously refrains from referring to any Israelites as “Jews” until the time of the Babylonian captivity. He does this because he knew that the people of the northern tribes were never called Jews, past, present or future.)

...and such was **the end of the nation of the Hebrews** (not the Jews), as it hath been delivered down to us,...for **the people of the ten tribes** (not the Jews) were carried out of Samaria by the Assyrians in the days of king Hoshea;...Now as to Shalmanezar, he removed **the Israelites** (not the Jews) out of their country (Samaria), and placed therein the nation of the Cutheans, who had formerly belonged to the inner parts of Persia and Media (not half Jew, half gentile, half breeds as so many modern day preachers are wont to say), but were then called Samaritans, by taking the name of the country to which they were removed (Samaria). (Antiquities of the Jews, Book X, ch.9, sec.7, emphasis and comments added here and below)

...the Cutheans, whom Shalmanezar, king of Assyria, had brought out of Persia and Media, and had planted in Samaria, when he carried **THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL** (not Jews) captive,..(Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, ch.II, sec.1)

....(for so many [12] are the **tribes of Israelites** [not Jews];)...(Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, ch.IV, sec.7)

...but then **the entire body of the people of Israel remained in that country; wherefore there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now (Josephus’ day), and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers.** (Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, ch.V, sec.2: emphasis added)

So the Jews (Judahites) prepared for the work (of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple): **that is the name they are called by from the day that they came up from Babylon, which is taken from the tribe of Judah, which first came to these places (Judaea)**, and thence both they (Jews, the tribe of Judah) and the country (Judaea) gained that appellation. (Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, ch.V, sec.7, emphasis and comments added)

And one additional note, the Apostle Paul stated:

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that

God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (Romans 10:8-11)

Josephus stated:

Jesus,..He was the Christ... he appeared alive to them again the third day...  
(Antiquities of The Jews, Book XVIII, ch.3, sec.3)

Josephus not only believed that Jesus was the Christ and that He arose from the grave, he confessed it (wrote it in his book) before the entire Roman world. I can not speak for anyone else, however, if the apostle's words have any meaning (they do), in my book (and I think in the book of life) Josephus was a certain and sure Christian, prophet [Wars of The Jews, Book IV, ch.10, sec.7], and Historian for Yahweh and Christian posterity. It is certainly unfortunate that his monumental work has essentially been ignored by so many.

The main problem with John Bray's Israelology is the simple fact that he, like so many others, just assumes that the Jews were and are "evidently representative of **ALL** of the 12 tribes of Israel" (p.22, para.1, emphasis in the original) **when in simple fact they are not!** The Jews represent the house of Judah (the southern kingdom) **nothing more and nothing less.**

There is no Biblical proof that the term Jew (Judahite) ever refers to any people other than the house of Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel, while the Biblical evidence is preponderant that the term Jew only means the **descendants of the house of Judah**, of the southern kingdom of a divided Israel. The word Jew, which is in reality a corruption of the word Judahite, literally is a person who inhabits that portion of the promised land inherited by the descendants of Judah which became known as Judaea (Judea). The word Judahite (Jew) was not used in the Bible until after the northern kingdom (the house of Israel) had been taken into the Assyrian captivity (Diaspora, 2 Kings 17:18ff et al., John 7:35 & 11:49 - 52). When it does appear in holy Scripture it is Babylonian slang for the people that remained in the area of Jerusalem (Judaea) after the conquest of the Assyrians (Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, ch.V, sec.7.) **which placed the ten tribes of the northern kingdom and a substantial portion of the southern kingdom into captivity** (the Diaspora).

On page 21, John's erroneous view of the word Jews leads him to misunderstand the statement which he quoted from Josephus. Ezra's nation **was not the total nation of Israel**. That nation had been violently split into two kingdoms long before (c.400 years) Ezra's time, and the northern kingdom had been ended by divorce, with the people being dispersed into the Assyrian captivity c. 200 years, before Ezra's time.

Therefore, Ezra's nation was the southern kingdom (house of Judah), particularly Jerusalem, which was taken, destroyed, and the people (the Jews) were taken captive into Babylon. When Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians, many of those Jews were moved into Media. Josephus clearly states that Ezra sent a copy of the letter "to all those of **his own** (emphasis added) nation that were in Media." This is not a reference in Josephus to the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom as John would have seen if he had read a little more carefully for just a few lines later Josephus does refer to the ten tribes, "but **the entire body of the**

**people<sup>1</sup> of Israel remained in that country** (emphasis added) wherefore there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates until now (“now” being the days in which Josephus wrote these words), and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers.” (read again Hosea 1:10) Explicit in this statement are the facts that the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity as prophesied and the ten tribes did not - also as prophesied. This is certainly true because the Bible makes it very clear that the kingdom (nation) of Israel was ended with the Assyrian captivity, but the nation of the house of Judah was not ended until 70 AD with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, also as prophesied. (For complete documentation of these things see the author’s book The Mystery of the Olive Tree.)

If the words of Josephus are accurate enough for us to accept in the first part of that paragraph, then **they surely must be accurate here as well!!!**

Also on page 22, fourth para.4 John states, “**Israel’s Prophesied Return to the Land Was Literally Fulfilled (in the Past)**” [emphasis in the original] This is a very misleading statement, and one that could not even be contemplated by anyone that truly knew the Bible, especially the Old Testament. What exactly does John mean by “Israel’s?” Does he mean the house of Israel (northern kingdom), the house of Judah (southern kingdom), or does he mean the united house of Israel and Judah? In certain places in the Bible the word Israel may actually refer to all 12 tribes. However, following Solomon’s death the 12 tribes were split into two warring factions identified as Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom) in the Bible. If John is using this term Biblically, as given in all the prophets, **he must be referring to the northern kingdom.** However, the remaining text, on pages 22-23, indicates that this is not his understanding of Israel.

John continues, “ALL the prophecies relating to a definite re-gathering of Israel from nations back to Palestine and Jerusalem, (sic) **were made BEFORE their return from Babylon.** (Emphasis in the original)

The following pages are the main portion of a letter which I wrote to John L. Bray on November 10th, 1998.

I am really puzzled about something. Why do you keep insisting that the Jews of the first century were the 12 tribes of Israel? Why is it that you can accept nearly everything that Josephus wrote about the wars of the Jews, the Man of Sin, etc. and then reject his incredibly direct and straight forward statement, “...then the entire body of Israel remained in that country; wherefore **there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans**, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now” (i.e. the time in which Josephus lived. A of J Ch.V, P.2). ***How can this possibly be construed to be a statement that Ezra gathered the ten tribes?*** It can only be a clear statement that Ezra **DID NOT GATHER THE TEN TRIBES** and that Josephus knew them to still be scattered in a country beyond the Euphrates at his time.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Josephus did not refer to the ten tribes as a nation, for he knew full well that the northern kingdom had been brought to an end c. 721 BC, however, he clearly acknowledged that even as late as the first century AD they still existed as a very large people group, exactly as Hosea had prophesied (Ho.1:10).

John, I do not see you as an adversary but as a friend. The only reason for these letters is to work toward any possible resolution of our differences that we may come even closer to the complete understanding of all truth revealed in both the Old and New Testaments.

Both the Old [Jer.31:31ff] and the New [Heb.8:8ff] Testaments teach that **the New Covenant is made only with the house of Judah and the house of Israel** for the purpose of taking away their sins, providing peace in salvation and making them forever into **ONE NATION** etc. ***IF THE GENTILES [NATIONS] ARE NOT, IN SOME MANNER, INCLUDED WITHIN ONE OF THE ABOVE HOUSES THERE CAN BE NO SALVATION FOR GENTILES [NATIONS] AND THERE IS NO PURPOSE FOR THE EKKLESIA [CHURCH]!***

In my opinion this text from Josephus does not say that Ezra gathered any of the 10 tribes. In the first place that Josephus text does not use the word Israelites, it uses the word Jews. Please understand: the Jews were Israelites, but **the people of the ten tribes (northern kingdom) were not Jews. The Bible never uses the term Jews in reference to the ten tribes** only to the two tribes of the southern kingdom, and so also with Josephus.

The text states that Ezra “sent a copy of it [Xerxes’ epistle] to all those of his own nation that were in Media; and when these Jews...wherefore there are but two tribes...subject to the Romans [the tribes of Judah and Benjamin].” In this context “his own nation” could only refer to the two tribes of the southern kingdom.

It had been over 450 years since the Israelites became two nations: the house of Israel, the northern nation and the house of Judah, the southern nation. Josephus makes it clear that in his life time two tribes [the house of Judah-Jews] were captives to the Romans the 10 tribes were “an immense multitude beyond the Euphrates TILL NOW i.e. in Josephus’ lifetime”.

John, the name of that nation, composed at least in part of this “immense multitude”, on the other side of the Euphrates during Roman times was the Parthian Empire. Rome never could really conquer them even though they tried many times. Thus they were not part of the Roman Empire as the Roman Empire stopped at the Euphrates River. Not only would it have been difficult and totally against Yahweh’s Bill of Divorce to the house of Israel (see Jer. 3:8, & the book of Hosea) for these people to return with Ezra, according to Josephus they did not.

Even if some small numbers of the 10 tribes had returned, according to the Torah, if a member of any other tribe chose to settle, or in this case to resettle, with another tribe they were in fact to be reckoned as part of the tribe in which they settled. This idea is brought out very clearly in Ez. 36 & 37, note especially verses 16 & 19 of Ch.37. In the case of members of the 10 tribes which may have returned and resettled among the Judeans; they would have been reckoned as Judeans. Josephus makes a clear point of informing us that only two tribes were subject to the Romans. Please look again at the two prophecies about the re-gathering of the ten tribes in Isaiah 10 and 11. The second re-gathering [ch. 11] is set in the time span of the “root of Jesse”. The New Testament clearly declares that the “root of Jesse” is Jesus Christ [Rom. 15:12 & Rev. 22:16] and the people gathered into Him are the branches of His “Branch” i.e. “Vine” [John 15:1-6]. [Note Gen. 49:10ff]

In addition to the above the non-canonical, apocryphal book of II Esdras 13:40 states, "...the king of Assyria led away captive, and he carried them over the waters [rivers], and so they came into another land." Nothing is said about the king of Assyria carrying them "into a further country where never mankind dwelt". Verse 41 does state, "But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the nation [Assyria], and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt,...43 And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river...45 For through that country there was a great way to go, namely, of a year and a half: and the same is called Arsareth. [John, where is Arsareth?] 46 Then dwelt there until the latter time; and now when they shall begin to come,..". According the best information I have II Esdras was written B.C., thus, the "latter days" of Esdras would be one and the same with the "last days" of the New Testament.

John I repeat, please understand that we are much in agreement. I do not see you as an adversary but as a friend. The only reason for these letters is to work toward any possible resolution of our differences that we may come even closer to the complete and proper understanding of all truth revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. Both the Old [Jer.31:31ff] and the New [Heb.8:8ff] Testaments teach that the New Covenant is made only with the house of Judah and the house of Israel for the purpose of taking away their sins, providing peace in salvation and making them forever into **ONE NATION** (Ez.37:15-27; Hosea 1:11, 6:11, et al.) etc. **IF THE GENTILES [NATIONS] ARE NOT, IN SOME MANNER, INCLUDED WITHIN ONE OF THE ABOVE HOUSES THEIR CAN BE NO SALVATION FOR GENTILES [NATIONS] AND THERE IS NO PURPOSE FOR THE EKKLESIA [CHURCH]!!!!**

I know and well understand the need to fit the pieces of history...together into a coherent non-contradictory way in as much as it is possible today, but when we do this we are never permitted to violate the clear teachings of the New Testament or the Old Testament.

The Bible is very clear that there always were some members of the ten tribes intermixed into the house of Judah, **BUT IT WAS STILL THE HOUSE OF JUDAH!** There was quite a bunch of the people from the house of Judah that went into the Assyrian captivity, **BUT IT WAS STILL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL.**

Yahweh had a special reason for dividing the tribes of Jacob into **TWO NATIONS**. He had a special purpose for each nation. Paul identifies those purposes in Romans 9:18-24. In this passage the whole (total of 12 tribes) of Israel is identified as a lump of clay. Yahweh (the potter) divided the lump into two parts. From one portion of the lump He made "the vessels of wrath" (the unbelieving of the house of Judah [see were Jesus declares that wrath unto them in Matt.23 and states, "Behold your house {of Judah—not the temple as some think} is left unto you desolate v.38]) from the other portion He made "the vessels of mercy" (the house of Israel which he divorced (Jer.3:8) and sowed into the nations (Hosea 2:23, Amos 9:9, Ez.36:19, etc.) from whence many years later Yahweh would write the law on there gentitized hearts (Jer.31:33), re-gather them (Ez.36:24-28, 37:21, Is.11:12) out from among the nations (gentiles, Acts 15:14) in the New Testament). In Christ He put the two lumps back together again.

That is what Romans 9 - 11 is ALL ABOUT! **THAT'S WHAT THE WHOLE STORY IN THE BIBLE FROM ABRAM (Abraham) TO CHRIST AND BEYOND IS ALL ABOUT!!!** This is the only valid explanation of how the nations (gentiles) came to be included in the New Covenant which Yahweh clearly states in both the Old and the New Testament He made *exclusively and only* with the **house of Judah and the house of Israel**. This is the only valid Biblical explanation of how salvation in Christ could be offered to the gentile nations. I will supply a substantial reward to anyone that can Biblically and historically demonstrate otherwise.

Read Romans 9:18 - 30 very, very carefully, especially verse 24 - 30, in these verses Paul clearly identifies the house of Israel of Hosea's and Isaiah's prophecy as the "Gentiles-nations" that are being gathered into Christ. This is the fulfillment of the prophecies in Ezekiel 37!

Read Micah 4:1 - 8 especially verses 1 & 6 - 8. Note the time (the last days [the first 70 years of the first century]), note the subject (the mountain [the kingdom] of the house of Yahweh=Yahshua), the recipients (two women, see v.6). Who are these two **HERS???** The "her that halteth" is the house of Judah [the Jews of the first century that killed (crucified) their Messiah of whom Christ says that He will take "the Kingdom of God" away from them and give it to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof (Matt.21:43)]. The second, "her that was cast far off" is the house of Israel (northern kingdom) that Christ says he is going to give the "Kingdom of God to" and "make...a strong nation" of them (Matt.21:43 & Micah 4:7b). Mount Zion in v.7 is Abraham's "city made without hands" the Bride of Christ (Christianity) the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:2ff. More about this another time! (See the enclosed paper "Yahweh's two wives")

John, my dear elder brother in the Lord, you continue to miss the most marvelous, most unifying part of Scripture, apart from the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Yahshua, as long as you continue to miss these great inclusionary (of the gentiles) portions of Scripture.

Dispensationalism and other isms have obscured these precious truths of the Bible for many years. John, I am praying that Yahweh-Yahshua will open your eyes to these wonderfully fulfilled prophecies in Hosea, Amos, Jer., Is., Ez. and Micah about the re-gathering of the divorced (gentilized) wife-kingdom-house of Israel and uniting them with the married wife-kingdom-house of Judah in the Messiah, as one nation (neither Jew nor Gentile) under one Shepherd King, as the New Jerusalem (the true Christian Israel), the Bride of Christ.

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