

## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

## The Apostles on the Twelve Tribes

In our brief survey of the sifting of Abrahamic seed among the nations we have been limited by practical constraints. What evidence is available from archeology? Can stones, or bones, or pottery tell how a people believed, what they thought, or their expectations of life? Can we penetrate the mists which veil the countless generations? Can we discover “scientific” proof of the genetic influence of Adam or Abraham on the western world? Surviving records from the Near East do not explicitly or clearly support this proposition. If we are to find evidence of folk belief we must look elsewhere. Europe had not yet begun to preserve her histories when the folk migrations began in 700 BC. We must rely on fragments here and there, on folk traditions, and on linguistic memories.

Consider the mathematical numbers in ancestry. We all have two parents, a mother and father. We have four grandparents, eight great grandparents, and so on. This number doubles each generation. In ten generations, perhaps 250 years, we each have approximately 1000 parents. Back another ten generations this number jumps to roughly one million. Back to the time of Jesus the number of our ancestral parents is one trillion, or one million million. Obviously these cannot be distinct parents; there must be many common ancestors interwoven in this multiplicity of numbers. In any tribe, clan, or common stock of people, without crossbreeding from exterior sources, the generations are like a web flowing in a common channel down through time, with every individual related by blood to every other. This common channel leads to certain racial or tribal characteristics which distinguish that group from another. The Germans are noted for their great mechanical skills. The French carry certain intellectual traits. The melting pot of America, with its great mixture of bloods, has produced unprecedented inventive genius but also a boisterous population noted more for its uncouth behavior than for its cultural refinement.

In spite of distinct traits displayed by European groups there was a tremendous mixing of tribal stocks. The Kelts overran and intermixed with a bronze age people, penetrating to the British Isles, Spain, Italy, and back into Asia Minor. Later the Teutonic Goths overran this strata, penetrating again to Spain and to the Balkan peninsula from origins around the Baltic Sea. The Anglo-Saxons invaded England after Rome departed. The Norsemen left their blood and linguistic influence on major sections of the British Isles. The French Normans spread themselves on top of the other layers. In eastern Europe the Asiatic Huns left traces of yellow blood which imprints physique yet today among Slavic people. The Norsemen also left a legacy down through those Slavic regions to the Black Sea.

Any precise trace of specific genetic endowments in this massive mixing of people would be impossible. Ten tribes are no longer ten groups of identifiable people; they have been thoroughly lost in this blending and blurring. The features of the people of Spain are different from the Swedish Norse. Perhaps those features are

due to particular characteristics of Israelite tribes, but identification of such endowment today would be beyond our technical skill. There are black Irishmen and red Irishmen. Did the bravery and great personal courage of the Kelts derive from an admixture of Adamic Indo-European stock mixed with Abrahamic blood? We cannot say how different traits were influenced by Abraham's seed.

Preceding chapters contain large voids in this brief survey. We did not examine Teutonic origins, nor Slavic, nor other important segments of possible Abrahamic influence. We discovered a few threads here and there and followed those with limited evidence. But the material is sufficient to demonstrate that a great religious power was at work on our planet to form and shape its destiny. Strands of belief show among various people. Tales of migrating Hebrew tribes and Stones of Destiny guided the choices and policies of the generations. Sometimes this produced highly distorted views, as Anglo-Israelism or Welsh "Hebrews." Nevertheless, this confused belief persuaded many generations. Although modern men regard such views today as strange theological persuasions there are elements in early Christianity which show that a true blood connection was known and accepted. This evidence is in writings preserved in the New Testament.

Matt 19:28 has this remark by Jesus:

**Truly, I say to you, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

See also Luke 22:30.

In Acts 26 Paul offered a defense before King Agrippa. As part of that defense he mentioned the twelve tribes of Israel, verse 6-7:

**And now I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by (no less than the) Jews, O King!**

The letter by James opens with the address:

**"To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion."**

I Peter 1:1 carries the same reference to a Dispersion:

**To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen and destined by God the Father ...**

References to twelve tribes of Israel also exist in John's *Revelation* but I postpone discussion of those passages to my work on *The Redeemed*.

What do these several references mean? Who are the twelve tribes? What is the dispersion? Who is exiled? What was the *“hope in the promise made by God to our fathers to which our twelve tribes hope to attain?”*

Looking around the world today we see no evidence for a genetic or physical “twelve tribes.” Not since long before the time of Jesus were twelve distinct Israelite tribes identifiable in any known geographical region. All historical, archeological, or linguistic evidence speaks for a great mixing and blending of racial stocks. Therefore, when the writers of the New Testament spoke of “twelve tribes” they must have had reference to people who were not specifically identifiable by tribal name. They referred to a large heterogeneous mass of people, not specific tribes. They must have used the term in a symbolic sense, not a literal sense.

The symbolic use of the phrase then leads to great contest over its exact meaning. Was it intended to denote a “spiritual” Israel? If it was intended to denote a genetic Israel how could such body of people be identified? Does it imply merely a spiritual endowment to a regenerated world? What did Paul, James, Peter and the authors of the Books of Matthew and Luke intend in their use of the phrase?

Modern biblical scholars offer remarks which demonstrate a disbelief. On Matthew 19:28:

**The Son of man is judge of all and the Twelve are associated with Him as patriarchs of the new Israel<sup>NBCR</sup>.**

**The twelve tribes of Israel are Israel restored to its ideal state, which is part of the new world that is to be<sup>CBC-GAM</sup>.**

**More probably Israel means the spiritual Israel, or the whole body of the Church; and the number twelve . . . imports the complete number of those being judged<sup>BBC-GAM</sup>.**

On Acts 26:6-7:

**6. Hope in the promise: This might seem most naturally to refer to the messianic hope. But the parallel with 23:6 and 24:15, and the words that follow in vs. 8, make it clear that the resurrection hope is in view. At the same time Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah is validated by his resurrection. Our fathers, i.e., the patriarchs, in particular Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.**

**7. Twelve tribes: The Greek has a singular archaic sounding word, dudekaphulon, which suggests, as the English does not, that in their hope the twelve tribes are one single community<sup>IB</sup>.**

These examples from modern exegesis show that the idea of a genetic Israel has been almost completely suppressed, and that the notion of “twelve tribes” is regarded entirely in a “spiritual” sense.

Much of this view is founded in Paul’s remarks about a “spiritual” Israel.

**Rom 9:6-7 – But it is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants; but “Through Isaac shall your descendants be named.”**

Some believe the twelve tribes are an anachronism. Those who hold such view propose that the idea of twelve tribes had clung so long in the minds of the Jews that they held onto the phrase 700 years after its literal meaning and application had passed. According to this interpretation the phrase really could mean only the Jews. But the phrase “the twelve tribes of the Jews” is never used in the Bible. The phrase is always “the twelve tribes” or “the twelve tribes of Israel.” Did the New Testament writers truly intend the Jews?

Although the apostles may have recognized a genetic component to the “twelve tribes,” later Christian theology denied this possibility by centering concepts in a “spiritual” body of Israel, without acknowledgement of a genetic element.

Paul speaks in the present tense. The twelve tribes were hoping and earnestly worshipping. He accepts their physical existence. He differentiates between the Jews and the twelve tribes. If he did not wish to distinguish why did he not say “us Jews” instead of “our twelve tribes?” He implies that the tribes are restricted by blood; “our twelve tribes” is used in the same reference as “our fathers,” a special application to Hebrew people. He is on trial only because he has been accused by Jews, one part of the twelve tribes, while all twelve hope to attain to the ancient promises at some future time. Paul works for that goal.

The *Interpreters Bible* ignores the remark except to say that the word translated “twelve tribes” suggests one single community, presumably “spiritual” Jewish and Gentile<sup>IB-9</sup>. F. F. Bruce states that “Paul knows nothing of the figment of ten ‘lost’ tribes<sup>NBCR</sup>.” Bruce maintains that Paul has in mind the promise of world-wide blessing to come through the progeny of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: the Jews, and thus through Jesus, a Jew. Bruce rigorously deflects any suggestion of Israelite people other than the Jews, and believes the promises were fulfilled completely in the person of Jesus.

In its treatment of the several Genesis promises *The New Bible Commentary: RevisedNBCR* virtually ignores discussion, adhering strictly to the theological position that Jesus was the embodiment of those promises.

The Dispersion, Greek Diaspora, is universally understood to mean the Jewish diaspora, a well-known phenomenon that existed from the times of Alexander the Great down to the twentieth century. But the letter is patently addressed to all Christians, both Gentile and Jew, although it presupposes familiarity with Old Testament scriptures.

**The twelve tribes seem at first to refer to Jews scattered throughout the world. The term is used for the living nation in Acts 26:7, though it is already an anachronism. The contents of the Epistle are, however, hardly limited to Jews. The Christian community is the new Israel of God and may therefore have this**

**term “twelve tribes,” descriptive of the old Israel applied to them. Christians are thus “scattered abroad” from their home and at best are temporary visitors<sup>NBCR</sup>.**

Note how the commentator, R. A. Ward, struggles with the problem. He believes that Acts 26:7 refers to the living nation of the Jews with an assumption that the phrase was already an anachronism when Paul wrote it. The twelve tribes are the believing Christian church, regardless of genetic origin; the phrase has nothing to do with blood descent. In his view the Dispersion then comes to mean that all believers are scattered abroad from their heavenly home and at best are temporary visitors on this world. Thus he avoids the possibility that descendants of twelve actual tribes are scattered abroad throughout the Near East, Asia Minor, and Europe.

The geographical regions cover most of Asia Minor north of the Taurus Mountains. The conventional Christian idea of exile is not that of twelve blood tribes scattered from their home in Palestine into the regions of Asia Minor, but of Christians who are *“away from their true homeland or metropolis in heaven<sup>TNTC-IP</sup>.”*

The word “exiles” would have been better translated as “sojourners” because the Greek word carries both the idea of alien nationality and of temporary residence. Once again we have the problem of whether these Christians are residing as aliens temporarily away from their heavenly home, or as blood descendants of Abraham temporarily away from their promised land.

In I Peter 2:9 the Christians residing in these regions are called “a chosen race,” “a royal priesthood,” “a holy nation,” “God’s own people.” A chosen race implies physical descent. D. H. Wheaton believes it may refer to the Godward and manward relationship brought about by the new spiritual birth<sup>NBCR</sup>.

The idea of a chosen race, or a chosen people, is as old as the Exodus under Moses, and applied to all the people of blood Israel, all twelve tribes, long before there was a difference between Jew and Ephraimite.

In Deut 10:15 it is stated that Yahweh set his heart in love upon the Hebrew fathers and chose their descendants after them, above all peoples. The phrase in I Peter reflects this belief, as applied to the Christian Gentile converts. They are inheritors of the promise.

Again the royal priesthood reflects Exod 19:5-6:

**Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all people; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**

The phrases in I Peter 9 are obvious repetitions of the passage from Exodus, which are promises made to the Haberi/Eberi/Ibri. If the writer of I Peter intended them to apply to people who were not descended by blood from the Hebrew tribes he is making a bald assumption. Then they understood that through Jesus’ death and resurrection they now become one with the body of the Jews and are part of “spiritual Israel” regardless of the genetics. They have “been born anew,” not as part of a

rebirth through physical descent, but through personal spiritual salvation. They are being brought *“to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven . . .”* This was for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last times by God’s power through faith, I Peter 1:3-5.

Is it possible the writer had in mind both a physical rebirth and a spiritual rebirth, and did not clearly differentiate between them? What did he mean by an *“inheritance which is imperishable?”* Does this remark have significance except with respect to the Hebrew traditions of Abrahamic blood descent?

Repeatedly we are faced with this problem in attempts to understand the New Testament remarks. Was this great evangelistic effort intended to save those who were blood descendants of Abraham, those who were not, or perhaps both? In I Peter 2:10 a reference is again made to one of the Old Testament promises:

**Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.**

The implication is that these Christians of Asia Minor never were God’s people and had never received mercy. It is not that they once were God’s people and had become lost, but rather that they never were God’s people. The quotation is from Hosea. The context is important.

In the allusions of Hosea 1 the prophet is told to marry a harlot, symbolic of the great harlotry committed by the people of Israel (not Judah) in their forsaking Yahweh. Yahweh was about to put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel (not Judah).

At the time Hosea delivered his message, Yahweh still had pity on the house of Judah, Hos 1:7. The harlot conceives three times, with a son, a daughter, and another son. In each case the child symbolizes the northern tribes of Israel. The third child is called *“Not My People”* because they were not God’s people and he was not their God.

**Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said of them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Sons of the living God.” And the people of Judah and the people of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head; and they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.**

The people of Israel are obviously different from the people of Judah. When Hosea wrote these lines his term “Israel” could only mean the ten northern tribes. It had no other significance. Someday they will be gathered together and will have one ruler.

Could the writer of I Peter have been ignorant of this context? Would he have slipped this phrase into his argument without regard for the intent of Hosea? We might expect quotations out of context from an inexperienced or unknowledgeable

person but hardly from the author of I Peter, who gives every evidence of knowing his sources, and who is a mature thinker. Would his quotation not cause his readers to search out the passage from which it was taken? It seems unreasonable that the author did not intend his phrase to mean the people of blood Israel who were lost, who were “no people,” but now, through the ministry of Jesus and the teaching of the Gospel, became God’s people. Indeed, they were aliens and exiles from the promises, I Peter 2:11, (compare Eph 2:12), not aliens and exiles from their heavenly home.

This view is emphasized in I Peter 2:25:

**For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.**

There could be no straying away unless they once belonged to that Eberic sheepfold; they could not return if they did not once leave. Of course one might view this as a departure from the blessed condition known to man before the fall of Adam; then they have strayed like sheep from that former ideal state. But this view is not the intent of the writer. His whole theme is wrapped around Abrahamic descent.

Paul discussed this question in considerable detail; his thought is more clearly expressed. The letter to the Romans is addressed to both Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians. That he was addressing both is indicated in 7:1 where he makes a particular point for those who know the law, certainly intending Jews, as well as knowledgeable Gentiles. This double address is also indicated in 11:13 where he remarks directly that he is speaking to “you Gentiles.” In 4:1 Paul asks a question:

**What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?**

The phrase literally in Greek is “*Abraham the forefather of us according to flesh.*” John Knox in IB-9 states that:

**The pronoun “our” in “our forefather according to the flesh” is not to be taken as requiring supposition that the Roman readers of this epistle were Jews (compare I Cor 10:1, where the apostle is unquestionably addressing Gentiles). The “our” is best explained by the fact that it appears in a question of an imaginary Jewish objector and is thought of as being addressed primarily to Paul, himself also a Jew, rather than to the Romans.**

Repeatedly we see the difficulties raised by such remarks in the New Testament. To avoid the “twelve blood tribe” problem Knox would have us imagine a Jewish person who has asked this question of Paul. Paul is responding to this imaginary individual. While this is an ingenious device for solving the problem of Paul’s phrase, and certainly a logical possibility, it seems to disrupt the flow of Paul’s argument, which is directed to all readers. The preceding verse of Chapter 3 asks the question,

*“Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?”* This question is obviously addressed to all Roman readers as an instruction for those who might question the role of the law, now that we live by faith and not merely by law.

He is emphatic, *“By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.”* This use of the third person shows the sense in which Paul intended the question of 4:1. It is a question which fits naturally in the context of his presentation as applied to his Roman readers, both Gentiles and Jews. The “we” of 3:31 is the same people as the “our” of 4:1.

Again he repeats this argument in verse 16 and 17:

**That is why it depends upon faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants – not only to the adherents of the law, but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations.”**

Did Paul mean that Abraham was the spiritual father of us all, which indeed he was, and not mean that he was the blood father of us all? The phrasing in I Cor 10:1, a letter addressed to Christian Gentiles, is similar:

**I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud.**

This could mean only the pillar of cloud which directed the movement of the people of Israel during the Exodus. His letter is addressed to people who could only be Gentiles; they could not be Jews. When he writes to them he includes them in that group which makes “our fathers” their biological ancestors, as well as his.

Again he includes the Corinthians in his collective address, *“these things are warnings for us . . .”* verse 6. His message is to Corinthians whose blood fathers were all under the cloud. If we were to accept that Abraham was merely the spiritual father of the Corinthian converts then we would be forced to apply this concept to all the fathers of Israel, all those who were in the Exodus. They too are spiritual fathers and not blood fathers.

Paul wrestled with the problem of the law. As a devout Pharisee, dedicated to the law of Moses prior to his conversion, he was trained to respect and uphold that law. But when he met God on the road to Damascus he saw a great light. It was not law that held men to God, nor God to men, but rather faith on the part of men, and grace on the part of God. At times he spoke strongly against the law:

**The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be heirs, faith is null and the promise is void, Rom 4:13-14.**

At times we are justified in questioning Paul’s insight into this problem. For

example:

**Yet if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness.**

Did Paul really mean that he would have had no covetousness if he had not heard about it from the commandment? It seems strange that he should speak this way. We all have experienced covetous feelings. Perhaps we did not always recognize them, but quickly we must have dealt with the possible social repercussions if we expressed them. Laws and commandments have nothing to do with such moral sense. We did not obtain the sense of right because of a commandment. We obtained it because of an inner voice or feeling which awoke us to it from inside. The commandment may clearly express the abstention from the act but it was not necessary to bring it to light. Paul's point is poorly taken.

This discussion was anticipated by a remark in 3:20:

**For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.**

Whether or not we agree with Paul on the source of the knowledge of sin we can see that his argument casts the law in a bad light. The Jew felt he was justified by works of law; Paul is now saying he is not. In order that he not strike his audience too harshly he attempts to balance his remarks.

**What shall we say then? That the law is sin? By no means!**

7:7

**We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin, 7:14.**

**So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin, 7:25.**

He goes on to say that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus set him free from the law of sin and death, the law of the Pharisee, 8:2.

Paul obviously faces difficulty in his attempts to treat the connection among law, sin, and the saving grace of Jesus. In order that he not be condemned by believing Jews, he enters into more intense discourse in chapters 9 to 11.

Numerous biblical students have noted the extraneous sense of these three chapters. If they were lifted from the *Book of Romans*, with chapter 12 continuing immediately after chapter 8, there would be no sense of discontinuity in his presentation. Had they not been included in the book no one would have ever questioned absence of a "missing" piece from the complete work. But this section contains remarks which more clearly defines Paul's views concerning the Gentiles, descended or not, from Abraham.

First he wishes that he himself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of his brethren, his kinsmen by race, 9:3. He would give himself if they could all be saved. What more could a man give than the prospect of eternal loss for the salvation of others?

They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs . . ., 9:4.

These are Jews, and to them belong the Abrahamic inheritance.

He then treats more rigorously the question of who is part of God's salvation.

Paul says that not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. He means that not all the flesh children of Abraham are a part of spiritual Israel. It is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God; it is the children of the promise who are reckoned as descendants. Though they were not yet born and had done nothing, good or bad, they became part of God's elect.

Paul asks, does this mean there is injustice on God's part?

Is God unjust because he has a chosen people beforehand? He answers, by no means! God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy and compassion on whom he will have compassion. It does not depend upon man's will or exertion but upon God's mercy.

Paul makes an outright statement that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God. He then goes on to quote from Hosea the same verses as did the writer of I Peter. Only a remnant of the flesh sons of Israel will be saved. Paul continues in this manner through chapters 10 and 11.

He prays that the Jews may be saved, 10:1. Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified, 10:4. There is not distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved, 10:12-13.

Did God reject his people? By no means! God did not reject anyone whom he foreknew among the Jews, 11:2.

Through the trespass of the Jew salvation has come to the Gentiles. If their trespass meant riches for the world how much more would their full inclusion mean, 11:11-12? If their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead, 11:15:

In his discussion Paul clearly intends that all Gentiles, all the people of the world, now benefit by the sacrifice of Jesus, from the path of salvation prepared at the time of Abraham.

He then goes into an illustration of a holy root and its various branches. If some of the branches were broken off and the wild olive shoot of the Gentiles was grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree, they should not boast. It is the root which supports the branches, not the branches which support the root. Through unbelief some of the original branches were broken off in order to make way for the wild branches. But this should be no cause for the Gentiles to boast; if the natural branches were broken off then more easily could the wild branches be broken off. Furthermore, if the natural branches, the unbelieving Jews, did not persist in their unbelief they could be grafted back in again. In use of the parable of the branches he

intends blood Israel.

Then he makes a remark which has led to great controversy.

**Lest you be wise in your own conceits I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved . . .**

Did he mean that the disbelieving Jews were the ones that were hardened, and that they would remain hardened until all Gentiles had been converted? By Israel did he mean spiritual Israel, not Jewish Israel, and that a hardening had come upon part of non-Jewish Israel? Would this hardening continue for some time until all of non-Jewish Israel would be converted? Did he mean the Gentile nations, as political units, and not merely the whole mass of Gentile people? When did he expect that the full number of Gentiles would come in, a hundred or a thousand years? Through his quotation of phrases from Isa 50:20-21 he puts this presentation into an apocalyptic frame, a work to be consummated at the future healing of the world.

Regardless of Paul's convoluted discussion, it is clear that he addressed himself to all Gentiles, even those who are not of blood descent. He may have felt an obligation to the Gentile blood descendants of Abraham but his work was to all the people of the world.

This is a primary tenet of Christianity. Jesus is God to the entire world, not to any one special people. He may have used the Jews as a vehicle of salvation but that salvation belongs to everyone. And it was through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus that it was guaranteed to everyone.

We find similar discussion by Paul in Galatians 3. It is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

**And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed," verse 8.**

Those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith. It was through Christ Jesus that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, verse 14. If you are Christ's then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise, verse 29.

In these remarks Paul is showing that the promises do, indeed, pertain to all who live by faith, not only the blood descendants of Abraham, but others also. Paul did not want to exclude anyone who had faith in God, regardless of their ancestry.

The great difficulty which Paul faced, as well as the other apostles, was the lack of keen insight into the difference between personal salvation, which was extended to all the citizens of the world, regardless of blood descent, and planetary salvation, which was focused through blood descent from Abraham. The one was spiritual; the other genetic. The two aspects of salvation were so intimately interwoven that a clear, incisive presentation was not achieved by Paul or any of the other apostles.

It may very well be that these problems were confused in the minds of the Apostles. The New Testament speaks strongly for a tradition and a belief that many of the people of Asia Minor, the Greeks, the Romans, the Kelts, and the Iberians of Spain, (Paul intended to go their Rom 15:24), all contained that Abrahamic gift of genetic endowment. He worked to bring this saving message to those people. But he also realized that the life of Jesus meant much more than blood ancestry. He became the spiritual savior and ruler of this world.

In order to offer greater insight into this confusion it may be helpful to show how Jewish people viewed the aspects of divine destiny in the period between the return from Babylonian exile and the birth of Jesus. This evidence exists outside the traditional Old Testament texts.

First, regarding the Diaspora. The *International Critical Commentary*<sup>ICC</sup>, in the Volume on the First Epistle of Peter, offers discussion of the widespread dispersion of Jews throughout the Near East and Mediterranean regions. According to Josephus in his *Antiquities*, 12:3-4, Antiochus the Great, circa 200 BC, settled two thousand Jewish families from Mesopotamia and Babylonia in Phrygia and Lydia. In 138 BC the Roman Senate wrote on behalf of the Jews to the kings of Pergamos and Cappadocia, I Macc 15:16-24. Agrippa, in a letter to Caligula, asserted that there were numerous Jewish settlements in Pamphylia, Cilicia, and the greater part of Asia as far as Bithynia and recesses of Pontus. Petronus stated that Jews abounded in every city of Asia and Syria. From this evidence modern commentators falsely assume that the New Testament writers meant exclusively Jews when describing the Diaspora.

Thus we have specific evidence how Israelite people populated the countries of those ancient times, not limited to the “northern” ten tribes. The essential difference between the Jew and his northern brethren was his determination to maintain himself distinctly different in his genetic and religious affiliations, although he blended with the economic and social culture of the surrounding people. The northern tribes, in their departure from their religious loyalties, also departed from their genetic loyalties, and hence, did not maintain so distinct a religious or genetic separation. They became one with the surrounding people. But the New Testament writers recognized their genetic gift to other racial stocks, and clearly understood them to be part of the Diaspora also. Then they, too, were exiles from the promises.

The continuing strong belief in the “twelve tribes” is attested in several places, inside and outside the Bible. That individuals identified with tribal stock is shown by Anna in Luke 2:36, where she felt herself descended from the tribe of Asher. Paul, in Rom 11:1 and Phil 3:5 identified himself as a Jew, from the tribe of Benjamin. The difference here was distinguished by Paul’s recognition of himself as a Jew, while Anna’s claim was to a non-Jewish tribe. In the Apocryphal works *Tobit* and *Judith* both claimed descent from tribes of Israel.

In the *Letter of Aristreas*, written sometime between the third and first century BC, a list of elders, fictional or not, is specified from each of the twelve tribes, “seventy-two in all,” Sect 51. In the *Testament of Benjamin*, 9:2, one of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, circa 100 BC, a statement is made that in the regeneration “the twelve tribes shall be gathered there.” In *II Baruch*, several statements are made: “And truly I know that behold all we the twelve tribes are bound by one

bond, inasmuch we are born of one father, 78:4." *II Baruch* 1 also says of "the ten tribes which were carried away captive," that "I will scatter this people among the nations that they may do good to the nations." In Chapters 62 and 63 the writer carefully distinguishes between the "nine and one-half" northern tribes, and the "two and one-half" tribes (of the Jews). In *The Assumption of Moses*, Chapter 4, the remark is given that, although "they have gone into captivity with their wives and their children," "God will remember them on account of the covenant which he made with their fathers." "And the ten tribes shall increase and multiply among the nations during the time of their captivity."

Obviously, we cannot interpret the remarks of the Apostles, and especially Paul, as addressing merely a "spiritual" Israel. While the Apostles understood that personal salvation was open to the entire world, biological salvation was through the twelve tribal blood lines. They knew this, and recognized this in their writings. Unfortunately, they did not distinguish between the two, that later generations could understand.

