

YOUR ROOTS YOUR DESTINY

Introduction

Does God keep His promises? Would He be willing to have and maintain a close relationship with a human like me?

I don't kid myself about being holy or perfect. There are even those occasions when I feel rebellious or tempted. Sometimes I do my own thing and I don't want to listen to the Divine Authority Figure who tells me what is right or wrong. I admit it! There are moments when I think I know best and I behave like a spiritual teenager who won't pay attention to His heavenly Father's instructions. It seems as though I have to learn some things the hard way.

So why would an omnipotent God having all the power of the universe at His command want to keep up an on-going relationship with the likes of me? Wouldn't a righteous, *holy* God eventually lose patience with my repeated mistakes and character flaws? Can I really depend on the Almighty to be there for me in spite of myself? After all, how can the Perfect One put up with the seemingly imperfectable? Why would He even want to bother?

Many people want a relationship with God these days. They're interested in a spirituality that produces personal happiness and contentment. This is a search to know and to be known by God. They would agree with the statement that "happy is the nation whose God is the Lord. Happy are the people he chose for his very own" (Psalm 33:12, ICB). But the big problem with this generalized desire for spirituality is that many people know neither what this Supreme Being is really like nor what He requires from those who would like to build a relationship with Him. People today don't know their spiritual roots. They don't understand the nature of the covenant relationships that the Almighty and His Messiah offer to both individuals and whole communities.

The purpose of this writing is to help reveal answers to all the above questions. The example chosen to help impart this spiritual knowledge is that of the ancient Ten Tribes of Israel, who have become lost to the view of the secular world. Most biblical scholars think the Ten Tribes of Israelites simply ceased to exist when their political state called the Kingdom of Israel was conquered in the late 8th century B.C., and its inhabitants ethnically cleansed from their Promised Land.

Those northern Ten Tribes were historically distinct and politically separate for over 200 years from their brothers of the southern Two Tribes—eventually nicknamed "Jews"—who formed the Kingdom of Judah. Today everyone knows what happened to the Jews over the centuries because the Jews kept a knowledge of who they were and preserved written records of their history. However, according to mainstream scholarly opinion, the national, ethnic identity of the northern Ten Tribes was completely destroyed by war, disease and assimilation. As a consequence, 10 of the original 12 tribes of Hebrews who left Egypt under Moses, conquered Canaan with Joshua and built the

magnificent Temple with Solomon, ceased to exist. They seemingly vanished, disappeared. They became lost, at least to the eyes of those writing history books.

That is certainly true. The Israelites of the northern Ten Tribes dropped out of sight. Nevertheless, this does not mean they ceased to exist. Perhaps a better description of what really happened to the Ten Tribes of Israel was that they were gradually but purposely hidden! After all, what are we to make of the scores of biblical prophecies that portray the descendants of the northern Ten Tribes as continuing to play significant roles on the world stage through time? Should the historical story and prophesied future of a majority of the people called “chosen” by God be considered unknowable, or maybe fictitious?

Many modern biblical scholars no longer believe that there really is such a thing as prophecy—a divinely inspired foretelling of future events. Such critics usually look at a message written by one of the biblical prophets as merely a historic and perhaps moralistic recounting of what had already happened. The idea that prophecy is tomorrow’s news written in advance is given short shrift. Authoritative statements in the Bible made in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel are often dismissed as mere pious hyperbole, hellfire-and-brimstone preaching, or maybe obscure spiritual metaphor. But the Bible’s own explanation about the nature of prophecy categorically states that it is an advance revelation of how God Almighty plans to intervene in the affairs of individuals, nations and the entire world:

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let them proclaim it, let them declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be. Do not fear, or be afraid: have I not told you from of old and declared it? You [“Israel whom I have chosen,” verse 2] are my witnesses (Isaiah 44:6-8, NRSV)!

People who assume that God is dead or never existed in the first place are making a mistake. But it is an understandable mistake. To see things spiritually is a gift given by grace. Human materialistic thought cannot comprehend divine spiritual understanding. The apostle Paul made this point extremely clear:

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength (1 Corinthians 1:20-25, NRSV).