

Over the centuries, there have been, and still are, many claims, assertions and theories, that after the northern Ten Tribe Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrian Empire in about the year 722 BCE, and then were deported to Assyria, they eventually became “lost”. There have been many volumes written about such ideas. Were the ten tribes of Israel really lost? Theories notwithstanding, what is important is what the Bible says. Let’s examine the claims in the light of the scriptures,



Were the “Ten Tribes of Israel” Really “Lost”?

and we’ll see if there is any validity to such assertions (**1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1**)..

THE BACKGROUND

The original **“twelve tribes of Israel” (Exodus 24:4)** established by Almighty God were in a covenant relationship with him which promised them certain blessings and protections, in return for their strict obedience to the Law Covenant (**Exodus 19:5-8; Leviticus 24:1-13**). However, they were warned of the dire consequences of disobedience (**Leviticus 24:14-39**).

Gross apostasy on the part of Israel king Solomon (**1 Kings 11:1-13**) was punished by a split of the twelve tribe united Kingdom of Israel, circa 930 BCE, into two parts, with **“Judah and the tribe of Benjamin” (1 Kings 12:16-24)** making up the southern two tribe kingdom, and the other **“ten tribes” (1 Kings 11:31,35)** making up the northern kingdom.

In flagrant violation of the Law Covenant, **“the ten tribes” “worshipped other gods, they followed the practices of the nations whom Yahweh had disposed” (2 Kings**

17:7,8 NJB). As a result, Yahweh allowed the terms of the covenant to be carried out in punishment, but not all at once.

BEFORE THE ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY

During the reign of good king Asa of Judah, circa 900 BCE, there was a flow of **“many people”** from the northern ten tribe kingdom of Israel, into the southern two tribe kingdom of Judah. We read:

“He summoned all Judah and Benjamin as well as those Ephraimites, Manassehites and Simeonites who had settled with them—for a great many people from Israel had gone over to Asa when they saw that Yahweh his God was with him. They assembled in Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa’s reign—2

Chronicles 15:9,10 NJB

From this we learn that “many people” from Israel at this early stage of the ten tribe kingdom were already living in the southern two tribe kingdom.

“In the time of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh and Hazor. He took Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria”—2 Kings

15:29 NIV

This first deportation from the northern ten tribe kingdom into Assyria was late in Pekah’s reign, circa 730 BCE. The second, and final deportation, is described as follows:

THE CONQUEST AND CAPTIVITY

“In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria . . . So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there”—2 Kings 17:6, 23 NIV

The above seems to indicate that there was an en masse total deportation, and that also the Israelites who were deported from their ten tribes may never have returned to their homeland, which is likely true. However, from the scriptures we also learn that not all of the Israelites who lived in the northern ten tribe kingdom were deported from their native soil in Israel, so there was not a total en masse deportation. However, notice something else that happened:

“The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and

Sepharvaim, and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites; these took possession of Samaria and lived in its towns”—2 Kings 17:24 NJB

This sounds like the Israelites who were living in the land of the ten tribe northern kingdom were entirely replaced by foreign people that the king of Assyria brought in to live and take possession of the land. However, other scriptures reveal that was not the case, as we shall see from looking at other scriptures.

AFTER THE ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY

“Hezekiah sent messengers to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, bidding them to come to the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover in honor of Yahweh, God of Israel. The courtiers went from town to town through the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but the people laughed and scoffed at them; even so, some people from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun were humble enough to come to Jerusalem”—2 Chronicles 30:1,10,11 NJB

These scriptures reveal that some years after the Assyrians conquered the territory of the northern kingdom of Israel, deported many of its inhabitants, and brought in many foreigners, there were still many Israelites from the ten tribes living there. This scriptural evidence, from the time of Hezekiah in the late 700’s BCE, stands as powerful proof that the ten tribes were not lost after the time of the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel. There is yet even more evidence the ten tribes were not “lost.”

AFTER THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

“The first to settle again in their cities and dwell there were certain Israelites, the priests, the Levites, and the temple servants. In Jerusalem lived Judahites and Benjaminites; also Ephraimites and Manassites”—1 Chronicles 9:2,3 NAB

Israelites of the northern ten tribes who were living in the southern two tribe kingdom when Babylon conquered it in 587-586 BCE were deported to Babylon along with Judah and Benjamin. Israelites of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are reported to have been living in Jerusalem after the return from exile in the 530’s BCE, so these important tribes of Israel were not “lost”.

“For the dedication of this house of God they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred

rams, four hundred male lambs and, as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, one for each of the tribes of Israel”—Ezra 6:17 NIV

After the exile, over 200 years after the ten tribes were conquered by Assyria and many Israelites deported, there were still twelve tribes of Israel in existence. This is further proof that the ten tribes were not “lost”, as is often asserted.

IN THE CHRISTIAN ERA, 700 YEARS AFTER THE CAPTIVITY

“There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher”—Luke 2:36 NAB

This incidental mention of an Israelite of the tribe of Asher, shortly after Jesus’ birth around 30 CE, is notable for the fact that the tribe was not assimilated into a mixed race of people and “lost”.

“I am standing here because of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors. Our twelve tribes hope to attain to that promise as they fervently worship God night and day”—Acts 26:7 NAB

This inspired scriptural testimony to the fact that Israelites from all twelve tribes of Israel were still alive and active. The ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel were not “lost”.

CONCLUSION

“Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true”—Romans 3:4 NLT

The assertions that the “ten tribes of Israel” were lost and assimilated into pagan peoples, or the British Empire, or the Indians of the Americas, **“have been weighed on the scales and found wanting” (Daniel 5:27 NAB)**, that is, they are proven false by the scriptures.

These last two assertions have even been DNA analyzed and proven the claims

false. **“Scripture cannot be set aside” (John 10:35 NAB).**