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How to See God in History

History is being rewritten with impunity. Here is some bedrock historical truth that will protect you from error.

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Why does America dominate the world today? Why did Britain create the largest empire in world history? Why is Western science, culture, art and literature so globally dominant?

Historians have devoted their entire careers to examining these questions. They lie at the heart of understanding the world today.

They also lie at the heart of many of our social problems. A new narrative is rising up that Britain, America and the white race in general rose to the top because they were crueler than the rest. "The white race is the biggest murderer, rapist, pillager and thief of the modern world," wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning founder of the *New York Times*' 1619 Project, Nicole Hannah-Jones, in 1995.

Thankfully, few are that extreme. Still, the rise of Britain and America is hard to explain. There is nothing like it in human history. It is stunning and profound, and quite moving when you think on it.

Consider how Britain—a speck of land sitting more than 3,500 miles from the equator, tucked away on Earth's northern frontier—a country that for millennia was only sparsely populated, that has existed precariously less than a marathon's distance from some of history's most dangerous regimes—a nation smaller than New Zealand or Ecuador, with a climate so cold, dark and damp that many consider it downright inhospitable—suddenly, unexpectedly sprang forth into the greatest empire ever.

Germany is 1.5 times larger than Britain. China is over 40 times larger, and Russia is 74 times Britain's size. Each of these countries has at some point possessed the ingredients necessary for empire: strong leadership and politics, strategic territorial assets, access to agricultural and mineral resources, technology. Yet despite these advantages, *not one* has ever come close to controlling as much of Earth's surface, possessing the wealth, or commanding the number of subjects as Britain's Queen Victoria in the 19th century.

Google it. Check the history books. Corner your professor. Study the chronicles of Greece and Rome, or China, the Ottomans and other Arab dynasties, the Aztecs. You'll soon see that in all of human history nothing parallels the stupendous prosperity, expanse and grandeur of the British Empire at its peak. Great Britain is a truly historical anomaly.

Meanwhile across the Atlantic, a nation went from brand-new to world-dominating in about a century.

What are we to make of this? A freak occurrence of international relations? Was it the result of a brilliant scheme concocted by some mystery statesman? Was it blind luck?

Historians struggle to explain it. But the Bible has the answer.

Understanding how and why this happened means understanding one of the most important prophecies in your Bible. This

prophecy reveals God's hand behind the broad stroke of history. Understand it, and you can see God's hand in just about any historical event.

Thank Abraham

Genesis 12 contains one of the most important passages of Scripture for understanding world history. In it God makes an all-important, two-part promise to Abraham.

Read verse 2. First, God says, "I will make of thee a great nation." Here, God promises tremendous national, material prosperity and power to Abraham's descendants. In *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*—a book in which the Abrahamic promise is the key theme—Herbert W. Armstrong termed the first part of God's promise a promise of "race."

Second, God promises Abraham that "in thee shall *all families of the earth* be blessed" (verse 3). Think about that. Doesn't this prove God is not racist, nor a respecter of persons or races? He clearly says that every human on Earth would benefit from His special relationship with Abraham! Mr. Armstrong termed this part of the promise the "promise of *grace*." This is the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham.

In this article we will concentrate on the first part of God's promise to Abraham, the "promise of race." This promise is the key to unlocking world history and Bible prophecy. Yet it is a mystery to historians today. World history—not just the history of Abraham's descendants, but the entire history of mankind since the time of Abraham—has been shaped and defined by God's promise to Abraham!

Here is how Mr. Armstrong put it: "Right here is where those who profess to be 'Christians'—and their teachers—have fallen into error and scriptural blindness. *They have failed to notice the twofold promise God made to Abraham* They recognize the messianic promise of spiritual salvation through the 'one seed'—Christ [Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8, 16]. ... This is a pivotal point. This is the point where professing 'Christians' and their teachers jump the track of truth. This is the point where they switch off the track that would lead them to the missing master key to the prophecies. They miss the fact that God gave Abraham promises of physical race as well as spiritual grace" (*The United States and Britain in Prophecy*; emphasis added throughout).

God's promise of *race* is the key that unlocks Bible prophecy—and we need to understand that key!

The Birthright Promise Conferred

In Genesis 17:7, God reaffirms His promise to Abraham. Here God not only gives more details, He says that His covenant with Abraham is an "everlasting covenant." Abraham would die, as humans do, but God's promise to him would not.

Genesis 26:3-5 clearly show God's promise of "physical race" (material blessings) as well as "spiritual grace" being conferred on Abraham's son Isaac.

In both Genesis 27:26-29 and Genesis 35:10-12 we read of the Abrahamic promise being passed on to Jacob, Isaac's son and Abraham's grandson. Read it for yourself: "And God said unto him [Jacob], I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins" (Genesis 35:11).

Notice how *specific* this promise is: When the time came to fulfill His promise of race, God would do it by facilitating the advent of a single great nation and a great "company of nations."

1 Chronicles 5:1-2 show the Abrahamic promise being conferred on Joseph, one of Jacob's 12 sons. Discussing the Abrahamic, or birthright, promise, verse 2 plainly says, "*but the birthright was Joseph's*." Again, it is amazing how *specific* the Bible is here.

In Genesis 48 we read of the birthright promise being passed on to Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Once again the promise is specific. Verse 19 says, "[Manasseh] also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become *a multitude of nations*." This is further plain proof that the promise of race—of material and national wealth and power—would be manifested in the emergence of a single great people (Manasseh) and a great company, or commonwealth, of nations (Ephraim).

Blessings Not Given to Ancient Israel

Has God kept His promise to Abraham? If so, *when* exactly did God fulfill it?

Secular history reveals the answer. Consider the spectrum of world history, and identify those times when two peoples—two distinct yet related peoples, one a great single nation, the other a great company of nations—emerged as wealthy, powerful and dominant.

And what about the Bible? Does God indicate *when* He would fulfill His promise to Abraham? To answer, let's turn briefly to Old Testament history.

God delivered the Israelites from Egypt in the mid-15th century B.C. By this time Israel was a full-fledged nation of 2 to 3 million people. It included people from the 12 tribes of Jacob. Sometime around 1400 B.C., God led Israel into Canaan. It was here, in the Promised Land, that God intended to fulfill His promise to Abraham. It was here, in the Levant, with Jerusalem as the capital, that He wanted to make Israel, specifically Ephraim and Manasseh, into a great nation and a “company of nations.”

However, although God *desired* to fulfill His promise to Abraham at this time, immediate inheritance of the Abrahamic promise was *conditional*. Ancient Israel would receive the promise in its time only if it met certain obligations.

What were those obligations? The key Bible passage that answers is Leviticus 26. This chapter is critical. Mr. Armstrong described it as the “very pivot of Old Testament prophecies.”

Notice how he explained it: “Leviticus 26 is the basic prophecy of the Old Testament. ... In this central prophecy, God reaffirmed the birthright promise—but with conditions—for those of Moses’s day! The birthright tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were then *with* the other tribes—as one nation. Obedience to God’s laws would bring the vast national wealth and blessings of the birthright, not only to Ephraim and Manasseh, but the whole NATION would automatically have shared them at that time” (ibid).

He continued, “There was a *condition*—a great big ‘if’—to their receiving actual fulfillment of this stupendous birthright promise *in their time!* God said: ‘If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; *Then* I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase ...’ (verses 3-4).”

Notice. God *wanted* to lavish ancient Israel with unparalleled wealth and power. He wanted to transform Ephraim and Manasseh, and all of Israel, into the largest, most powerful empire ever. But He would only do so if they obeyed Him.

If Abraham’s descendants rejected God and disobeyed, God said He would curse Israel by *postponing* the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise!

Seven Prophetic ‘Times’

For how long would He postpone it? God actually tells: “And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins” (Leviticus 26:18).

The meaning of this statement is dual. The expression “seven times” comes from the Hebrew *shibah*, which can also mean *sevenfold*. As Mr. Armstrong explained, “The ‘seven times’ implies *duration* or *continuation* of punishment. But the word also conveys the meaning of ‘*sevenfold*,’ or seven times greater *intensity* of punishment—as a punishment that is sevenfold more intense” (ibid).

This “pivotal prophecy of the Old Testament” reveals that the punishment will be seven “times” more *intense*—and also seven “times” in duration.

In the language of biblical prophecy, a “time” is a specific period—a prophetic 360-day year. (For proof on why a prophetic year in the Bible is 360 days and not 365, request *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*) And as is the case so often in prophecy, each of those prophetic “days” represented a *year* in the fulfillment of Israel’s punishment.

You can see this day-for-a-year principle in effect when Israel was to inherit the Promised Land anciently (Numbers 13-14). After Israel’s spies scouted Canaan and returned a faithless report, the fearful Israelites refused to enter the land. God then *postponed* their promised inheritance and sentenced them to roam the wilderness for *40 years*. Why 40 years? Numbers 14:34 explains: “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, *each day for a year*, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.” Following this day-for-a-year principle, the promised blessings of Abraham were withheld for *40 years*, each year representing one day that the spies had scouted the land.

Remember, God said in Leviticus 26:18 that Israel would be denied the birthright promise for seven prophetic “times”—that is, seven 360-day years, a total of 2,520 days. When you apply the day-for-a-year principle, that becomes a punishment of *2,520 years*. In this case—just like in Numbers 14—it involves the withholding of God’s promised blessing.

Yes, God specifically prophesied that He would postpone blessing Abraham’s descendants for 2,520 years.

Now, does the Bible tell us when God *enforced* this postponement?

2,520-Year Delay

Follow Israel’s history. After Moses’s successor Joshua led the nation into the Promised Land, it endured about 350 terrible years under the judges. God then established the monarchy, but the Israelites continued to suffer under their first king, Saul. After Saul’s reign, “[t]hey began prospering under King David, and in Solomon’s reign they reached a considerable state of prosperity. However, they had not yet flowered into the full predominant-world-power status promised under the birthright,”

Mr. Armstrong wrote (ibid).

When Solomon died, anarchy and instability set in. Within a short time, civil war had split Israel in two. The kingdom of Judah—comprised of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with Jerusalem as its capital—inhabited the south. The other 10 tribes, with Ephraim as the lead nation, split away and inhabited the north. They were known as Israel.

Over the ensuing decades and centuries, the 10-tribed kingdom of Israel continued to embrace the evil ways of its first king, Jeroboam, who was an Ephraimite. Israel became filthy and rebellious in God's eyes, and the people were unrepentant. God sent prophet after prophet to warn them, but they rejected God's every warning. Never did they receive blessings on the scale promised to Abraham.

By the late eighth century B.C., God was left with no other option. Israel simply would not repent, and the time had come for the nation to be punished—and, according to the prophecy of Leviticus 26:18, for the birthright promise to be postponed. You can read the history in 2 Kings 17. It describes how God used the Assyrian Empire to destroy Israel and take it captive. Israel's downfall was conclusive. Virtually the entire kingdom was dragged out of the Promised Land!

Assyria's invasion and destruction of Israel occurred between 721 and 718 B.C. History books document this; it is easy to substantiate. As Mr. Armstrong explained—and as logic implies—Israel's banishment from the Promised Land marked the beginning of the postponement of the birthright promise!

"From that time," wrote Herbert Armstrong, "God sent no prophets to them. He gave them no more chance to receive the greatest national blessing of all history—until the end of the 2,520 years! He hid, as it were, His face from them! He removed them out of His sight. He pleaded no longer with them. They had not qualified for nor deserved His blessings!" (ibid).

Having established that, the math is simple: Take 721–718 B.C. and *add 2,520 years*. You arrive at A.D. 1800–1803.

It was certain: History would have to follow a new pattern. God would not pour out the blessings promised to Israel until A.D. 1800.

Once Israel's behavior had made this new pattern of history necessary, God gave the Prophet Daniel visions showing how it would unfold. With Ephraim and Manasseh not dominating the world for 2,000 years, other powers would rise up. God revealed to Daniel the series of empires that would fill in the gap. The history of all of these empires—Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and the subsequent attempts to revive the Roman Empire—revolve around Israel. *History unfolded in the vacuum created by Israel's downfall.*

Imagine how different world history would have been if Israel had obeyed God and inherited the Abrahamic promise at the time of Solomon. There would be no Greek or Roman history—at least not the way it is written today.

The Great Promise Finally Fulfilled!

Beginning in the year 1800, God began to fulfill the promise to Abraham that had been specifically conferred on the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh. In the 19th century, He orchestrated the rise of a single great nation and a great "company of nations."

You can clearly see it happen in the history of America and Britain.

A person could write a book on the rise of America and the British Empire in the 19th century. Actually there are *multiple* history books on this subject. More than a few historians have documented all the conditions that "mysteriously" converged, even starting in the 17th and 18th centuries, to facilitate the sudden emergence of the British Empire and the United States.

Consider all the significant developments in Britain between 1500 and 1800, the three centuries leading up to the apex of the British Empire. The Protestant Reformation. England's divorce from Catholicism under Henry VIII. The unification of England, Scotland and even Ireland, for a moment. The rise of England's navy and its dominance over the water highways. The Industrial Revolution and Britain's emergence as the world's economic, cultural, philosophical and technological hub. There is also the demise of Britain's competitors during this time, such as the miraculous defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 that removed Catholic Spain as a threat, and the defeat of Napoleon in 1805.

Many historians recognize Britain's unique, seemingly inexplicable arrival as a world power. "Some of the elements required for an economic transformation were present in other parts of the world," writes Paul Johnson. "*But only England possessed them all in combination.* The 'miracle' had been brewing for 150 years; or, to vary the metaphor, a number of conventional factors of economic growth had been drawing together, and in the late 18th century the resultant mass became 'critical,' and the explosion took place" (*The Offshore Islanders*).

Each of these events was critical in laying the foundation for the British Empire. With each event—and there are more beyond those listed above—God was preparing England to receive the blessings of Abraham!

You can conduct the same exercise with America. Think about the Continental Congress and Declaration of Independence; the development of the Constitution, which gave the fledgling nation a foundation for political stability; the Louisiana Purchase; the expedition of Lewis and Clark; the California Gold Rush. America also witnessed the demise of regional

competitors—especially Catholic European powers, namely France and Spain—along its southern border. Each of these events was critical to America’s ascendance. Again, with each event, God was preparing the United States to receive the blessings of Abraham!

A History-Changing Event

I haven’t come close to documenting all the details that fell into place around 1800 to facilitate Britain’s and America’s emergence as world powers. Even the weather in Britain during this time, as Paul Johnson has noted, was historically good. That is, it was conducive to agricultural success, which means full bellies and healthy humans, which means rapid population growth. You can go through the blessings in Leviticus 26 and compare the very specific prophecies of material prosperity with history books of the time period—and see these prophecies fulfilled exactly.

“The *most remarkable fulfillment of biblical prophecy in modern times* was the sudden sprouting forth of the two mightiest world powers—one, a commonwealth of nations forming the greatest world empire of all time; the other, the wealthiest, most powerful nation on Earth today,” Mr. Armstrong wrote. “These birthright peoples came, with incredible suddenness, into possession of more than two thirds—nearly three fourths—of the cultivated wealth and resources of the whole world! This sensational spurt from virtual obscurity in so short a time gives incontrovertible proof of divine inspiration. Never, in all history, did anything like it occur” (op cit).

Stop and think about the implications of this prophecy—not just for America and Britain, but also on world history. Broadly speaking, it is safe to say that world history as we know it is largely the product of the Abrahamic promise—especially the *delay* of that promise because of the Israelites’ rebellion! Other powers were able to rise because the Israelites disappeared as a power for 2,520 years!

Now think about the last 200 years. For more than two centuries the world has been dominated by two powers: one a single great nation, the other a great company of nations. Together, America and Britain are the primary architects of the world we live in, especially the Western world. The world has been transformed in virtually every way—for better and worse—as a result of the material wealth and intellectual, political, cultural and moral advancement and dominance of these two nations.

Finally, think too about the history of Britain, the British Empire and Britain’s phenomenal transformation in the 19th century from a fledgling island into the richest, most expansive and impressive empire in human history.

Britain and America’s story truly is remarkable—its wealth, the grandeur, the vastness of its territory, its accomplishments, its power. But it is remarkable most of all for the way it provides living, *tangible*, quantifiable proof of God’s existence!

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