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The Ten Lost Tribes

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Abstract: This article speculates on the location of the original settlement of the lost tribes on the river Jordan, including Levi.

Second, we know that baptism was practiced among the Nephites (Mosiah 18; II Nephi 9:23, 24), and was commanded as a rite absolutely essential to salvation. Since the Nephite dispensation grew out of the Jewish, long after the time of Moses, the doctrine of baptism must have been known among the Jews at that time.

Lastly, the testimony of writers on the customs of the Jews seems to be that when converts or proselytes, were made to the Jewish faith, they were admitted as "proselytes of the gate" by water baptism, and as "proselytes of the temple" by circumcision. (See Bagster's Bible Helps, art. "Proselytes.")

Now, as to the purpose of baptism among the Jews, and the incompleteness of the ordinance on account of the absence of authority to confer the Holy Ghost, but little can be said. It must be understood that a complete gospel dispensation was not then given to the Jews; they possessed the Aaronic priesthood which holds the right of water baptism; hence, their rites and ceremonies could scarcely have the full meaning that they possess in this dispensation. If baptism was practiced, and we think it was, it must have been merely water baptism administered for one of its present objects, viz.: admission of converts—to Judaism then, as to the Church of Christ now. Remission of sins seems to have been sought by other means, as, for example, by the sin offering, the peace offering, etc.

Therefore, when John the Baptist came, he did not introduce a ceremony strange and unknown to the Jews. He merely gave to an old and familiar ordinance a new, or at least a more complete, meaning and efficacy; promising remission of sins through baptism of water and of the Spirit. The completion of the ordinance of baptism was reserved until the coming of Christ, at which time the Holy Ghost was conferred. (See Matthew 3).

The Ten Lost Tribes.

Which of the twelve tribes were the two and one-half tribes that settled on the east side of the river Jordan; and were the nine and one-half tribes remaining the same people commonly called the Ten Lost Tribes?

Answer by Prof. Willard Done: The two and a-half tribes that settled on the east side of the Jordan were Reuben, Gad, and

half of the tribe of Manasseh. (See Joshua 13:8; Numbers 32:33). The other nine and a half tribes were distributed at the same time, on the west side of the river, from Dan on the north to Simeon of the extreme south. Simeon was afterwards subjected to the persistent attacks of the hostile hordes of the southern desert, and was broken up and scattered among the other tribes, in accordance, with the prophecy of Jacob in Genesis 49:7. This left the tribe of Judah in possession of the extreme south, and Jerusalem became the chief city of Judah, and was subsequently the capital of the entire Israelitish nation, during the reigns of David and Solomon. (2 Samuel, 5:5).

When Solomon died, the ten and one-half tribes occupying the north revolted against his son Rehoboam, and established an independent kingdom under Jeroboam. (I Kings, 12). These were the tribes, constituting the Kingdom of Israel, with headquarters at Samaria, that were taken captive by Shalmanesar, king of Assyria, and were afterward known as the "ten lost tribes." They were Ephraim, Manasseh, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Dan, Zebulun, Simeon, Naphtali, Reuben, half of the tribe of Benjamin, and such Levites as were then located in the northern kingdom. (II Kings 17:5-41).

The southern kingdom, Judah, was composed of but one and a-half tribes, viz.: all of Judah and half of Benjamin, together with such Levites and scattered members of the other tribes as lived in the region of Judea. These were carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and subsequently returned to Palestine. (See II Kings 25; and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah).

It will therefore be seen that the tribes that settled originally on the east side of the Jordan were among the ten lost tribes, and were not identical with the two tribes that formed the later Jewish nation.