



The Ephramite Fable

It is time to reject speculative and divisive theology and return to the clear, unambiguous teaching of the New Testament.

BY MALCOLM HEDDING

The Ephraimite teaching has infiltrated the Christian Zionist movement and threatens to bring it into disrepute. Essentially, it is a misguided attempt to identify Gentile believers in Jesus with the half-tribe of Ephraim, which later in Scripture became synonymous with the Northern Kingdom of Israel exiled to Assyria in 722 BC. These Ten Tribes are deemed to be lost but now rediscovered in the Church! There are three versions of this error:

1. The actual theory

This view holds that Jesus only came for the lost tribes of Israel and only died for them. They deny the clear teaching of Scripture that He died for the world. His atonement is thus limited and those who embrace the Cross are in fact Ephraim, most without knowing it. Some adherents claim the right to make aliyah!

2. The replacement theory

Those holding this view do not believe in a limited atonement but do believe that Ephraim was lost without recovery and has been replaced by them! In other words, they exist “instead of” the original tribe.

3. The affiliation theory

This group believes that in some way they are affiliated with Ephraim and appeal to a type of special revelation to explain this. In this context, they rely on much use of understanding terms, the secondary meanings of words, and spiritual speculation.

All of this is nothing short of wishful thinking! It is nowhere supported in Scripture. Most important, the New Testament is totally silent about it and indeed attributes the passages that they claim refer to Ephraim to the Gentiles. This constitutes a huge problem, so they mostly steer clear of the New Testament to assert their position. In reality, the Ephraim teaching is nothing more than a version of the old British Israelism heresy! It exists on the false notion that the northern Ten Tribes of Israel were lost. They were not. They were simply dispersed abroad and found everywhere (James 1:1).



Moreover, Paul's point in Romans 11 is not about a hidden Gentile identity but about the fact that Israel's partial rejection of Jesus' Messianic credentials opened the door for those who were “not My people” to be grafted into spiritual Israel (Romans 9:24-28; Hosea 1:8-10). These, in his thinking, are real Gentiles and he says it clearly. There is no hidden meaning here (Romans 11:11-26). This, too, is his theology in Ephesians 2:11-13.

In addition, a promise of rejection, of not being “My people,” is always followed by a promise of recovery. This is the plain meaning of Hosea 1:11. There is nothing more to be read into this. Paul only ever refers to non-Jews as Gentiles. He sees no other significance in the term “Gentiles.” The Ephraimite theorists that attempt otherwise are playing around with what Paul calls “Jewish fables” in Titus.

Further, the “two sticks” of Ezekiel 37 are just what they indicate. That is, a day will come when Israel will not be known by tribes but by one naming entity. That day came a long time ago in that even by the time of Christ all of Abraham's natural children were called Jews. Even Paul used the designation, although technically he was not a Jew but from the tribe of Benjamin! (Philippians 3:4-5) Today, Ezekiel's vision of “one stick” has been fulfilled in that the Jews – inclusive of all the Israelite tribes – have returned home as one nation.

No theology is built on so-called unique revelation. This is Gnosticism, another early heresy that threatened to “derail” the Church (Colossians 2:18-23). The Bible is for all people for all time, including the lowly and uneducated. Its teaching, touching who we are, is clear and unambiguous in the New Testament. We are not Ephraim but Gentiles brought near by the grace of God to the commonwealth of Israel. We are not Israel by tribal affiliation.

To assert anything else is to pollute the Church with doctrines of contention and division. 🌐

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