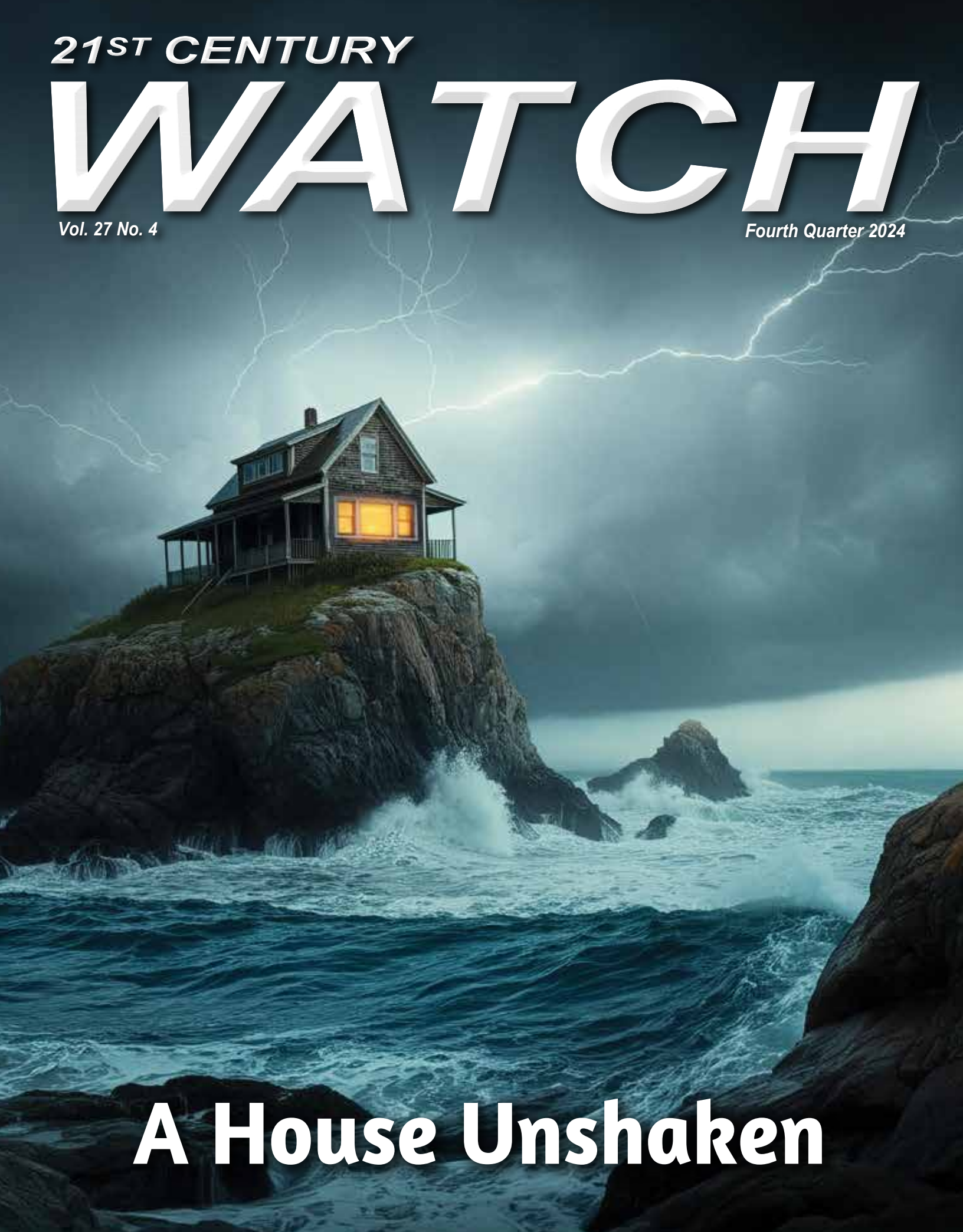


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WATCH

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A House Unshaken

THE POWER OF ONE

by Michael Armstrong



Problems. How much of our time and energy is spent dealing with problems? How much grief and sorrow must we endure? An impartial observer might be tempted to conclude humanity prefers to be miserable! Almost without exception media portrays an endless string of violence and revenge, poor choices leading to poor results, and haphazard attempts at correction. The basic elements that underpin happiness and contentment are the same for all of us. How is it then, that our collective efforts seem to fail so miserably?

We suffer from a lack of personal responsibility. There is a failure to recognize the power of each individual to shape this world for better or worse. Too easily we lapse into blame and excuse. Yes, we are all the product of circumstances beyond our control. Upbringing, environment, inherited conflicts and oppression in addition to the unique situation of each city, region or nation shape each of us. So powerful are these factors that many are convinced there is “nothing I can do” and resign themselves to a sort of permanent victim-hood. This is a trap!

If it stops you from trying, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Recognize the impact these larger issues have on life, for better or worse. God sees where the responsibility lies. As Christ said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). He calls us to the truth in every instance. We must accept our circumstances without being defeated by them! If you can see the error in that which surrounds us, then know that you have the God-given potential to change it for the better!

It starts with the individual. Each of us is the first line of defense. There is a tremendous opportunity in this, to prevent the evils of the past from controlling the future. Many steal because they feel they have been stolen from. They hate because they are hated. They are brutal and neglectful because that is all they have ever know. They abuse because they have been abused. It is the twisted justice of hypocrisy to perpetuate that which we detest. Each of us has the potential to break these vicious cycles in our own lives.

Sadly, many of these tragedies also begin with our own

lust and covetousness. Ego and the desire for wealth are often the initial error. “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). The repercussions are not confined to the individual, though many will attest that they are the ones who end up suffering the most, be it from just punishment, guilt, or the destruction of personal relationships and the loss of trust.

God offers a way out. He can forgive as well as forget. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man...” (1 Cor. 10:13). We should be extremely grateful that God understands our weaknesses,

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“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

“He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

“But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.” Luke 6:46-49

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ANCIENT HATREDS STILL SEETHING TODAY



by Garner Ted Armstrong

The hatred that seethes in the hearts of Islamic Arabs against Israel and the United States is neither political nor new. It is an ancient hatred inherited from generations of families who clashed, warred, licked their wounds and warred again over many centuries — long before the false religion of Islam swept the Arab world commencing with the sixth century after Christ.

Today, each bomb blast, each massacre, each murder triggers anguished outrage, mindless anger and hate among the combatants in Israel and the Mideast — each side has long since forgotten the original provocation. Today, as Israel kills terrorists, and as terrorists blow themselves and their victims to bits in suicide bomb attacks, each act triggers vows of violent revenge!

Arabs attack Israelis. The

Israelis shoot back, kill or arrest Arabs, then destroy the homes of those responsible. Arabs vow revenge. The endless violence is not merely political. It is primarily RELIGIOUS and RACIAL! To understand the depth of this ongoing murderous rage, one must understand the ethnic and religious origins of the peoples in the Mideast.

The Arabs know they are the descendants of Abraham through Hagar. They know their ancestor is Ishmael, Hagar's son by Abraham; that Hagar was an Egyptian, and that Abraham's wife, Sarai (Sarah), jealous of Hagar, cast out her maid with her newborn boy. Common names among Arabs are "Ibraim," for Abraham, and "Ismail" for Ishmael. The striking prophecies concerning Ishmael; that he would become the father of many

nations; that he would be a "wild man of the desert"; that he would "dwell in the face of [or in the presence of] his brethren" (Isaac, and his son Jacob — who became Israel — and the twelve tribes which descended from him), and that there would be never ending trouble between Ishmael, Isaac and his descendants are fascinating to read. Only by understanding the ancient jealousies and rivalries between these two sons of Abraham can one come to understand the hatreds seething in millions of Arab's breasts today.

The account is found in Genesis 16: "Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. [Note: The Hebrew name Hagar means "flight."]

"And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath

restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

“And Sarai Abram’s wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

“And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

“And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

“But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face” (Genesis 16:1-6).

It is implied that Hagar was more than a slave. She and Sarai may have been close, even confidants, even though the servant/mistress relationship was maintained. Obviously, they conspired together in the matter for Hagar was acquiescent, and not the victim of rape — a Biblical account of human reason contrary to God’s law — to bring about the world’s first example of surrogate parenthood.

Sarai’s humiliation is hard for modern women to understand. Then, it was shameful for a wife to be barren. Was her husband not interested? Was he impotent? Was she truly barren, or did she refuse

him? The gossip and speculation which was sure to ensue caused humiliation for a barren wife, who recognized that the very purpose of her life was to bear her husband’s children; to become the mother of children and grandchildren, and generations to follow, so that the family name was never to

“His hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he will dwell in the presence of all his brethren.”

be lost. That a woman would have a “career,” or go into “politics” was utterly unknown in that time.

Notice what happened after Sarai began persecuting Hagar, causing her to flee: “And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

“And he said, Hagar, Sarai’s maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

“And the angel [Hebrew: “messenger”] of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

“And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

“And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; [Note: “Ishmael” means “God hears”] because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

“And he will be a wild man [Literally: “A wild ass man” connoting the disposition of his character and those of his descendants; the disposition of a wild ass of the desert; hardy, independent, aloof, uncontrollable. The name did not connote a “wild jackass” or anything approaching it, but

meant a man who would manage to survive in a wild, hard desert land] his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of [in the face of] all his brethren” (Genesis 16:7-12).

The implication of these prophecies is nowhere found any more concentrated than in the Bedouin Arabs of today. *The Critical and Experimental Commentary* by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown says: “‘dwell in the presence of his brethren,’ — i.e., even in dwelling with his brethren would he maintain his characteristic hostility; and others...take the words in a geographical sense, i.e., ‘to the east — eastward,’ ‘he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren, viz, in Arabia.’” (Vol. 1, p. 150).

That prophecy has come to pass. The highest concentration of Arabs occurs in the Mideast, where they have always dwelt. Edom and Moab, the two illegitimate boys from an incestuous relationship between Abraham’s nephew, Lot, and his two daughters, were

Continued next page

prophesied to “settle on their lees” and to remain in their ancient land. They are there today.

Ishmael lived in the Arabah, or the desert, just as the prophecy stated. When Abraham died, Ishmael was present with Isaac and the other descendants. “Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.

“And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian [Moses’ wife was a Midianitess and therefore a descendant of Abraham], and Ishbak, and Shuah.

“And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim.

“And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

“And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.

“But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto

the east country” (Genesis 25:1-6). Naturally, this aroused keen jealousies in the breasts of all nineteen of these sons and grandsons, who would have reasoned, “Abraham is our father, the same as Isaac! Why are we being treated any less?” Ishmael in particular would have been incensed, for he knew he was the “firstborn” and therefore deeply resented Isaac.

The account continues with the death of Abraham: “And these are the days of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.

“Then Abraham gave up the ghost [“breathed his last”, or expired], and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.

“And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

“The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

“And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi.” Note that this is the same well which had succored Hagar and her infant child, Ishmael. The name means: “well of the life of vision,” or “well of life after seeing God.” Another possible cause of deep resentment on Ishmael’s part, for he must have certainly viewed the location, an oasis in a harsh land, as a miraculous place; a place where his own life and that of his mother were spared by God.

“Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s handmaid, bare unto Abraham:

“And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

“And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,

“Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:

“These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations” [Note: Kedar, along with other descendants of Ishmael, are mentioned as having traded with Tyre, the great city which existed for two thousand years] (Genesis 25:7-16).

Ezekiel prophesied: “Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots.

“Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in



“Hagar and Ishmael” painting by George Hitchcock

these were they thy merchants.

“The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold” (Ezekiel 27:20-22).

David mentions having been a fugitive for a time “in the tents of Kedar,” showing them to be an eastward, nomadic people (Psalms 120:1-7 says, “In my distress I cried unto the LORD [he was among those of Ishmael], and he heard me.

“Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue [the Ishmaelites of Kedar].

“What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?

“Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

“Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

“My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.

“I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.” This sounds for all the world like the struggle to find a “Mideast peace process” between Israel and the Arabs today.

Ishmael died at a very old age: “And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost [expired] and died; and was gathered unto his people.

“And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren [A vast

area, extending from Sinai and the Gaza strip to modern day Iraq and Kurdistan].”

Notice the intricacy of the prophecy of the 83rd Psalm, and how it applies today to Israel and the Ishmaelites with their allies: “Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

“For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

“They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

“They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance [this is precisely the aim of all Islam! It is the literal documented purpose of the PLO and the many terrorist organizations who want to literally exterminate the nation of Israel!].

“For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee [Many “summits” among Islamic nations have taken place, talking of tactics in the ongoing struggle of Islam against the Jews]:

“The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes [Notice the name “Hagar” thus identifying these people as descendants of Ishmael];

“Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines [modern-day “Palestinians”] with the inhabitants of Tyre;

“Assur also is joined with them: they have helped the children of Lot. Selah” (Psalms 83:1-8). Assur is modern-day

GERMANY! The “Ammonites” were descendants of the incestuous children of Lot by his own daughters; Moab and Ammon. Ammon gave his name to the modern capital of Jordan, “Amman.”

Now, notice the prophecies against these peoples of the Middle East, and their final fate:

Concerning the Hashemites, which includes Arabs in several Middle eastern nations, particularly Jordan, God says, “Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them;

“And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity;

“Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. [Compare with Daniel 11:40-45].

“And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couchingplace for flocks: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

“For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel;

“Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to

the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 25:1-7).

It is to be doubted that a single soul in Jordan, Iraq, or Saudi Arabia KNOWS THAT ELOHIM IS GOD; that their false concept of “God” is utterly untrue. The expression “and they shall know that I am ‘The Eternal’ [JHVH, or Jehovah, in COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL]” appears frequently in Ezekiel’s prophecies. The Islamic Arabs do NOT know that the One who became Jesus Christ in the flesh is the SAME personage of the Godhead who saved Hagar and Ishmael!

One has only to study the plain statements of John 1 and Hebrews 1 to understand this vital truth.

Now, notice the prophecy concerning Moab, Seir [the rocky hills and defiles of eastern Jordan and Turkey] and Edom: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen;

“Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Bethjeshimoth, Baalmeon, and Kiriathaim,

“Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations.

“And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall

know that I am the LORD.

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom [Edom is ESAU; modern-day Turkey] hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them;

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman [Teman gave his name to the “Ottoman Turkish Empire.” One of the leading tribes of ancient Turkey was the “Temani.”]; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword.

“And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 25:7-14).

Now, notice the little-read, little-understood prophecy of Obadiah, which is set in the immediate aftermath of the Day of the Lord and the second coming of Christ: “The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom [“Easu is EDOM: Genesis 36:19]; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.

“Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

“The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock [Mt. “Seir” is mentioned many

times in connection with Edom], whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

“Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.

“If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?

“How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!

“All the men of thy confederacy [as you read in Psalms 83] have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.

“Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?

“And thy mighty men, O Teman [A chief tribe; the name given to the “Ottoman Empire.” which was in league with the Kaiser in World War I, and was defeated by General Allenby of Britain], shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

“For thy violence against thy brother Jacob [whose name was changed to Israel] shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

“In the day that thou

stood on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them [Note: For centuries, Turkey has stood astride one of the most important “Sea Gates” of the world — the Bosphorus/Dardanelles — between the Aegean and the Black Sea, thus providing Russia with its only warm water ports].

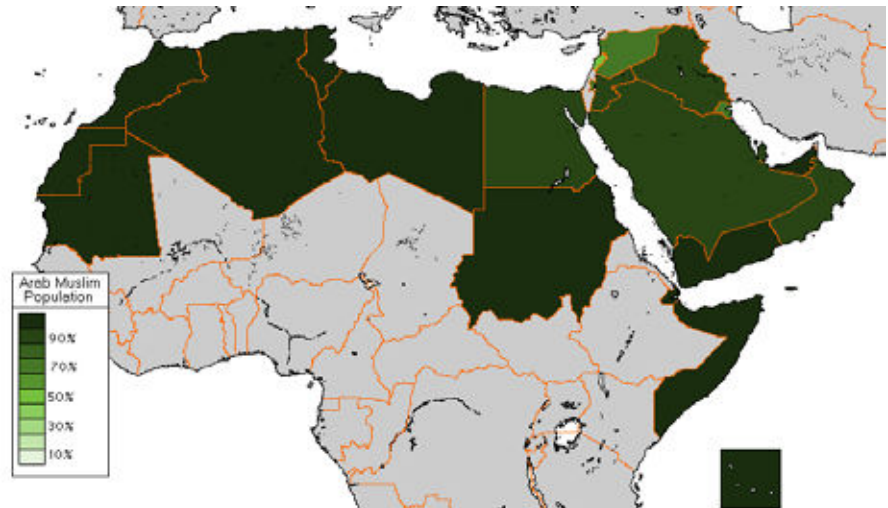
“But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress [speaking of the future captivity of Israel during the Great Tribulation — see Jeremiah 30:1-11].

“Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity;

“Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.

“For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

“For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea,



Historically, the Arab League, composed of Muslim majority nations, largely revolves around forming a united front against Israel.

they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

“But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance [because the Deliverer has come!], and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

“And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame [Joseph means Ephraim and Manasseh!], and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it.

“And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.

“And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in

Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.

“And saviours [PLURAL! Resurrected saints will join Christ as He commences the SECOND HALF of His seven year ministry!] shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S” (Obadiah 1-21).

Judging from the many prophecies about the Middle East, one can depend on this! It is NOT UP TO THE UNITED STATES or BRITAIN to punish the treacherous sons of Abraham or brothers of Isaac! God Almighty will judge each nation according to its individual and national sins!

The final throes of the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord will consist of God’s judgments on ALL THOSE NATIONS WHO FOUGHT AGAINST ISRAEL! But this means not only the modern nation of “Israel” in Palestine! It also means, and most specifically so, the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Britain! ☐

Will They KILL Him?



by Mark Armstrong

Another would-be assassin tried his luck, and it didn't turn out so well. What was the guy thinking? That he'd be an international hero? He'll have lots of time to ponder that. The talking heads say, "Trump has to tone down the rhetoric or this will keep happening." Really? The claims made by the media and all their favorites on Capitol Hill have nothing to do with setting off someone who's already off their rocker?

He's wearing that jet out, appearing somewhere nearly every day, giving interviews and it must be a burden. He's saying that if we don't return to the Constitution and get these agencies under control, it's over. We live in a blessed nation here in the United States, and we'd better give thanks for what we have all the time. But we could lose it, and turn into a lawless quagmire.

The next several months are critical. Who can deny that the great United States of America is on its back foot? Everything has been delegated to underlings who'd better know what they're doing. It looks like Joe has been kicked to the curb, having done everything that was required. He might have gotten rich in the process, but time will tell. We hope we haven't been sold down the river, but it wouldn't be the first time. Remember the Clinton years.

Unbelievably, Hillary Clinton thinks it's a good time to speak out. It would be OK with

me if she enjoyed her ill gotten gains and stayed away. But no, she's on the talk circuit making wise statements. She thinks they're wise anyway. Hillary says it's Trumps own comments that are bringing these assassins out of the woodwork. Really?

You've got to believe that the mainstream is scared to death. They'd better hope the next one doesn't miss. He tried to be Mr. Nice Guy, and let bygones be bygones, but that didn't work. They've pursued him relentlessly to make sure he never regains power, and this time it's for keeps. Can you imagine the shrieks and wails if he wins again? They've tried everything, and he's still standing.

Not to get carried away, but I'm starting to think he's got divine protection. I hope so. Almost immediately the big dogs came out and called Trump a danger to the country and to the world, and some obviously take it to heart. No wonder people are trying to kill him, he's a danger! If you listen to his speeches, you'd have a hard time reaching that conclusion.

Maybe you saw the bombs that went off in the terrorists' pockets. At this writing, a wider conflict with Hezbollah in Lebanon is developing. We have yet to hear the extent of the fallout from this. It'll probably spark another rocket barrage.

You think now the terrorists will make a

deal, now that thousands of their numbers are wounded, permanently? They talk big, but no one is listening all these years later. They've been saying the same thing all this time, and obviously don't want to solve the problem unless all the Jews go somewhere else. But they're not going, and it's been since 1948, so...

They've tried attacking before, and it's never gone well for the terrorists. Much to their chagrin, Israel is still there, and larger than before.

Ukraine is hardly on our radar anymore. It's gone on too long. But the devastation is hard on the eyes. How many people have been displaced, and where did they go? It's been a bloodbath, and we don't know the half of it. Trump says, if elected, he'll end the Ukrainian war before he moves into the White House.

Right now it feels like the United States is not a player. Where is the leadership? Has everything been delegated to the nitwits they brought in with them? The Europeans are looking down their noses, outraged that we're not concerned about the climate. For their information

it has been the coolest summer in memory here in Texas, where it's supposed to be brutally hot. It always cooled off at night. It's been wonderful. But we're supposed to be in a panic all the time, worrying about the planet, ready to drive battery cars to let everyone know we're doing our part.

We're constantly worrying about things that don't mean anything. The media is consistently directing our attention away from what matters, and trying to make us worry about what they're worrying about. No thanks.

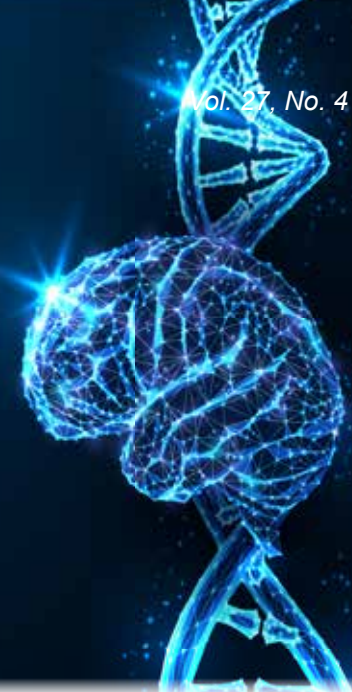
Will they succeed in turning our attention away from the tenets that made America great in the first place? Are we so wrapped up in our pursuits that we can't look at the big picture?

The world is a mess. There are wars and rumors of wars, but that's been the case before. We're just anxious to see if America gets another revival. The number of people coming out to see Donald Trump is astounding. Meanwhile, Zuckerberg has done what amounts to a *mea culpa* regarding the last election. Make no mistake... They're scared. Hopefully it's justified. □



Your Thoughts and Actions Can Impact Future Generations

by Craig White, *FriendsofSabbath.org*



Christians have heard of or read the Scriptures dealing with curses upon third and fourth generations:

“...Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” (Ex. 34:7. Also Num. 4:18; Deut. 5:9.)

Like many other Scriptures, these may be multi-layered containing both overt and hidden meanings. Duality is imbedded within the Word of God and it behoves us to take notice of the Scriptures and not constrain ourselves to a limited interpretation.

The basic thesis of this article is that it appears that we can pass on our character, attitude and health, let alone physical attributes, to one’s offspring via one’s behaviours and eating habits — there appears to be a generational impact resulting from our experiences, actions and thoughts.

REVELATIONS FROM SCIENCE

Rahel Wells attempts to understand this from a theological, rather than genetic, perspective:

“One of the more

challenging aspects of the covenant curses [of Deuteronomy 28] is that some curses seem to put the consequences on the children when it was their parents’ fault for sinning. For instance, the wounds that God causes carry on to their offspring in Deut. 28:59. However, **this might also be an example of epigenetics, or that the children partake in the sins of their parents**, not so much that God is punishing the innocent children for sins they did not commit (cf. Exod 34:7; Joshua 7). God makes clear in many other places in Scripture that he does not blame the children for the sins of their parents and vice versa (cf. Ezekiel 18; 33).” (“Christ in the Covenant Curses? Deuteronomy 28 and the Gospel,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 32, Nos. 1-2, 2021, p. 43 [emphasis mine].)

Many would have already been aware that this is likely, and importantly a modern study has confirmed what Christians have long suspected:

“Eat poorly, and your body

will remember — and possibly pass the consequences onto your kids. In the past several years, mounting evidence has shown that sperm can take note of a father’s lifestyle decisions, and transfer this baggage to offspring. Today, in two complementary studies, scientists tell us how.” (Katherine Wu, “Dad’s Pass on More than Genetics in their Sperm,” *SmithsonianMag.com*, 26 July 2018).

You can read the rest of the article online, along with many others representing comparative arguments. But what is being demonstrated is that the Scripture is true and accurate, thousands of years before its time. The Scriptures appear to be gelling with the laws of behavioural genetics that researchers have discovered.

According to these researchers, the laws of behavioural genetics are as follows:

1. Human conduct is inherited.
2. The genetic effect outweighs the influence of growing up in the same family.

3. The impacts of genes on families do not explain a large amount of the diversity in complex human behavioral traits.

4. There are numerous genetic variants linked to a typical human behavioral attribute, but these variants only make up a very small portion of the total behavioral diversity.

5. All phenotypic interactions (i.e., observable traits) are mediated or confused by genetics to some extent.

Referring to point 1, it is now proven that identical twins grown up apart will be comparable in every conceivable way. In general, genetic similarity predicts behavioural and other phenotypic similarities across all human relationships, regardless of environmental circumstances. That is, identical twins are more similar than fraternal twins or complete siblings, who are more similar than half-siblings, who are more similar than first cousins, and so on indefinitely.

The question is, after creation, were human behaviours that imprinted on future generations part of the way human conduct was generated and continued? Is this how national traits were developed?

“The phenomenon has long been known in psychology: traumatic experiences can induce behavioural disorders that are passed down from one generation to the next. **It is only recently that scientists have begun to understand the physiological processes underlying hereditary trauma.** ‘There are diseases such as bipolar disorder, that run

in families but can’t be traced back to a particular gene,’ explains Isabelle Mansuy, professor at ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich...

“Mansuy and her team have succeeded in identifying a key component of these processes: short RNA molecules...” (“Hereditary trauma: Inheritance of traumas and how they may be mediated,” ScienceDaily.com, 13 April 2014” [emphasis mine].)

Take for example a study undertaken at the University of Cambridge which revealed that a father’s life experiences, including food consumption, drugs, exposure to toxic products, and stress, can significantly impact the development and health of his children and grandchildren. (McGill University, “Environmental memories transmitted from a father to his grandchildren,” *Science Daily*, 8 Oct. 2015).

“This has turned the traditional belief that life is about nature versus nurture on its head. What this really means is that nature (our genes) is intimately intertwined with nurture (our environment), **and these epigenetic changes have deep roots in the choices of our grandparents, and in those of their grandparents.** The emergence of epigenetics has provided us with two gifts. One is a forewarning that the way we live today does have significant consequences for our children, our grandchildren, and beyond. And the second gift is one of empowerment. Regardless of what took place two generations before us, we still have

tremendous power to modify our own gene expression with every thought, every mouthful, and every physical movement we choose to engage in. Our genes are waiting for direction from us. My advice? Go for the apple.” (Pamela Peeke, “You Are What Your Grandparent’s Ate,” *Maria’s Farm Country Kitchen*, 14 Nov 2013 [emphasis mine].)

Readers may be interested in the following article which highlights the importance of epigenetics to them, “Epigenetics—Inheriting More Than Genes,” www.AnswersInGenesis.org, 24 Jan. 2021, by Georgia Purdom:

“Epigenetic markers, how your parents’ diet may affect you, and the problem it poses for evolutionists...

“The food you eat and other aspects of your environment can change these tagalongs. Then they can be passed down to your children and even your grandchildren, affecting the genes that are turned on.”

CAN MEMORIES BE PASSED DOWN THE GENERATIONS?

Consider this: if one’s physical appearance (especially face), mental attributes, talents, propensity to particular diseases and sicknesses can be carried down the generations, then why not memories? After all, our genes “remember” the aforementioned.

In a remarkable article, “Scientists have found that memories might be passed down through generations in our DNA,” 30 May 2014, we find that Emory University School of Medicine has discovered that

certain information can be inherited through chemical changes in DNA. The study found that mice can pass on learned information about traumatic experiences, such as fear of the smell of cherry blossom, to subsequent generations. This suggests that experiences are transferred from the brain into the genome, allowing them to be passed on to later generations. The researchers now aim to further understand how information is stored on DNA and whether similar effects can be seen in human genes. However, more careful mechanistic study of animal models is needed before applying these findings to humans.

The Battle of Beginnings, as well as the establishment and their media allies.

But, “Science is a complicated, historically shifting play among nature, theories and a host of often-unstated nonempirical principles that shape our thinking, evaluating, theorizing and even perceiving. Since the parts are so interwoven, changes in one part frequently have consequences for the content and contours of other parts. Parts do change over time — theories are replaced, shaping principles alter, and so forth. And sometimes entire systems involving all three components are overturned and replaced by others” (p. 128).

what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.” (Rom. 7:15,18)

But to be clear: one’s inherited attributes do not overwhelm one and this can never be used as an excuse for any negativities or criminal activities. It is not some sort of invisible force that overwhelms one or possesses one, but it does seem to tug or pull at one in a certain direction. A sort of propensity to this or that behaviour. Yet one can still make decisions that can change the propensity. In other words, though these pull and tug at us, in the end we have far more capacity at making decisions and choosing what to do — we have free moral agency and must take personal responsibility for our own actions. Animals have less capacity to do so — much less. See Scriptures that support this position such as Deut. 16:15-20; Eccl. 8:11; Phil. 2:12; II Pet. 1:10; James 1:13-14.

Perhaps the mental imprint of the founders of the nations listed in Genesis 10 was so powerful as to affect the behaviours of their descendants for centuries. In other words, unresisted propensity may exert a powerful influence. Hence national characteristics originate this way, at least in part?

For example, some admixture may dilute or change the propensity in some way, but this will take an enormous amount of research and vast resources to prove or disprove.

In a header to their article on epigenetics, *Vision* magazine contained this statement: “Science is revealing how our environment and behavior from conception to old age affect not



For many years, some churches believed — like so many in society used to — that you could sort of “imprint” character (to some degree) on future generations by one’s behaviour. There was a lot of research on this over the decades which was later “pooh-poohed” by the liberal-left academic Del Ratzsch in

How much more so with inherited traits? As the Apostle Paul was inspired to write:

“For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do

only us but also future generations. The Ripple Effect.”

According to the article’s author, Dan Cloer, understanding epigenetic systems reveals that humans are preprogrammed at birth for certain behaviors, which can be changed and reprogrammed in the future. This can lead to harmful relationships and suggests a form of inheritance outside our DNA code. This revelation is unexpected, but it could be beneficial for our well-being. (“The Ripple Effect,” *Vision*, Fall 2012, online.)

Another article of note is “Can trauma be passed on through our DNA?” by Jonathan Davis, 3 March 2016. The article discusses that understanding how to heal from trauma before passing it on to the next generation is crucial. So, thanks to the emerging discipline of epigenetics, researchers are uncovering that trauma can be inherited by future generations through mechanisms beyond just learned actions.

Previously it was stated that these influences do not, of course, possess you or force you to do anything. They simply influence you or provide an “urging” of sorts to operate in a certain way. You are not helpless to change and I might add, not all these influences are bad. Some are good or a mixture of good/positive and bad/negative.

It is almost as if these in-built influences “drag” you in a certain direction because inside your mind are forces or energies that pertain to certain behaviours or characteristics that you are born with. See Rom. 7:15-23.

These come from your parents and even distant forefathers.

In this regard one article worth a read is “Culture etched on our DNA more than previously known, research suggests,” CBS News, 11 Jan. 2017 by Shanika Gunaratna.

The study suggests that factors like common ancestry, culture, and environment contribute to the genomes of individuals within the same ethnic groups. For the first time, researchers have quantified the non-genetic aspects of race and identity for those from the same ethnic background.

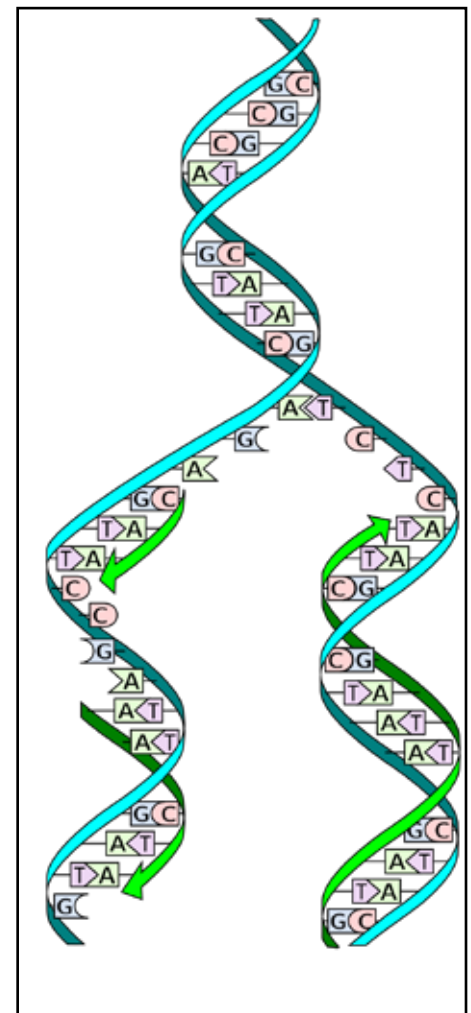
The researchers examined DNA methylation — markers that can be inherited or altered by life experiences and influence gene expression — in 573 Mexican and Puerto Rican children. They found 916 methylation differences associated with Mexican or Puerto Rican ethnicity. Interestingly, only three-quarters of these differences could be explained by genetic ancestry. This led the researchers to theorize that a significant portion, around one quarter, of these DNA fingerprints likely reflect the biological signatures of environmental, social, and cultural differences between the ethnic groups.

Factors like diet, neighborhood conditions, and smoking habits tend to vary across racial and ethnic groups. These subtle cultural and environmental differences can be manifested in DNA methylation patterns!

The study’s lead researcher, Dr. Esteban Burchard, emphasized that this furthers our

understanding of the complex relationship between race, ethnicity, and biology. It suggests that the common framework of viewing race/ethnicity as social constructs versus genetic ancestry as a biological construct is overly simplistic.

Going forward, the researchers plan to explore whether these findings apply to other



DNA replication: The double helix is un‘zipped’ and unwound, then each separated strand (turquoise) acts as a template for replicating a new partner strand (green). Nucleotides (bases) are matched to synthesize the new partner strands into two new double helices.

Continued next page

populations beyond the Mexican and Puerto Rican groups studied. Understanding the interplay of genetic, environmental, and social factors in shaping racial and ethnic identities is crucial for healthcare professionals in diagnosing and treating health issues.

“The research suggests that abandoning considerations of race and ethnicity in medicine — as some academics, who view race and ethnicity as social constructs, suggest — would be a grave mistake, and that these lenses carry valuable insights for more precise and

culturally specific medicine.

“The future of medicine, Dr. Burchard argued, carefully considers genetic ancestry, race, ethnicity and culture all at the same time. He published research back in 2011 showing how far the medical research establishment is from factoring in the nuances of race and ethnicity. That 2011 research showed that 94 percent of study participants in modern genetic studies are white, Dr. Burchard said.

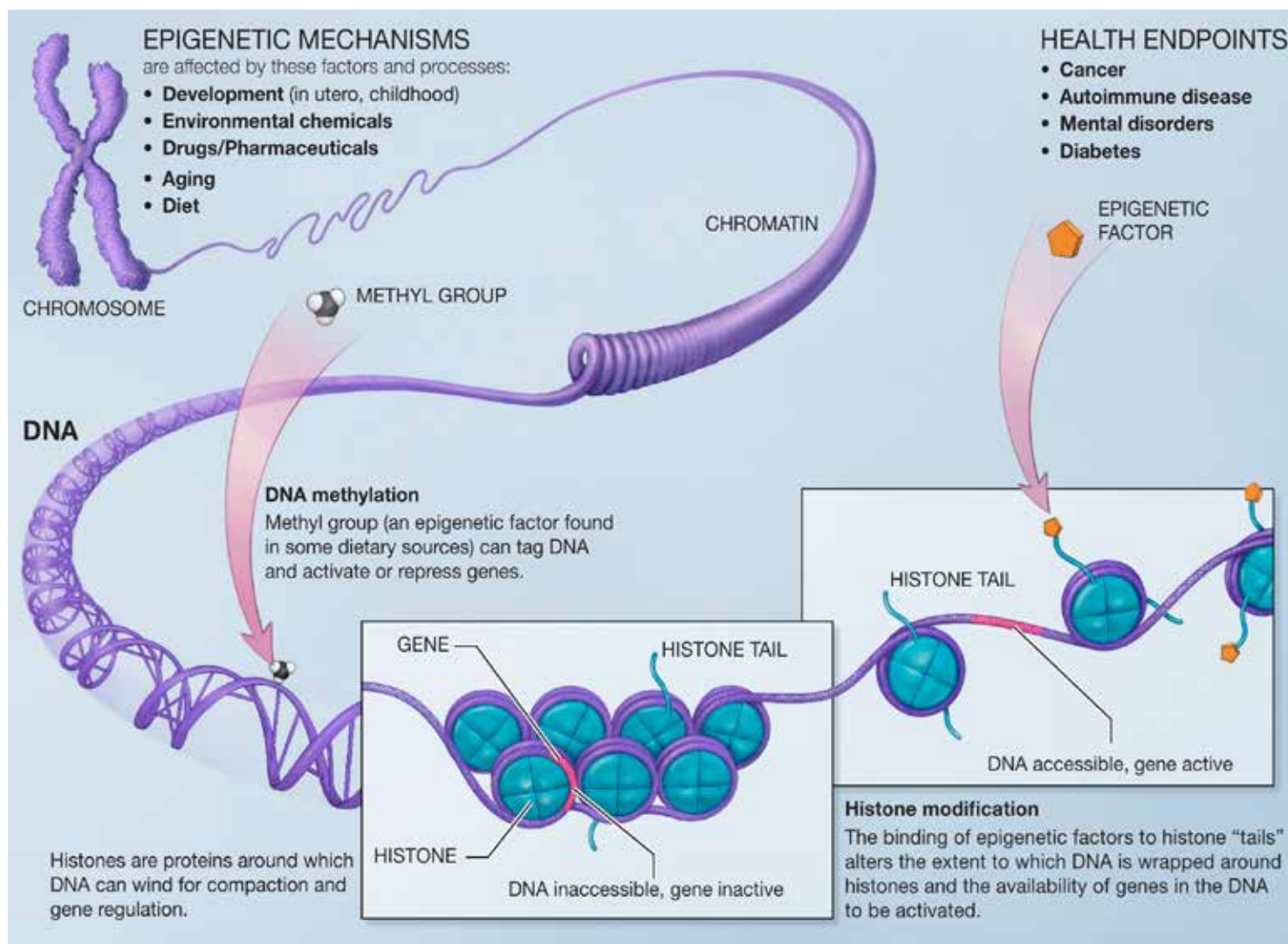
“We study whites a lot, and then we try to generalize that to Sri Lankans, blacks, Asians,

and other racial groups. **That’s not just socially unjust, it’s bad science and bad medicine’** Dr. Burchard said.” [emphasis mine].

LESSONS FOR US TODAY

The great lesson to take away from the above is simple: control your thinking, reactions to traumatic events, and eating habits for the sake of future generations. Because you can pass on attributes — both positive and negative.

You can either be a blessing or a curse to those that come after you — your very descendants. □



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

COCAINE SHARKS

As if sharks weren't scary enough... A study conducted off the coast of Brazil found cocaine in the liver and muscle tissue samples taken from all of the 13 specimens they studied. The causes are thought to include insufficient wastewater treatment and runoff from illicit processing centers as well as the sharks actually attacking packages of the drug set afloat by smugglers. Waste and water samples also contain detectable contamination from cocaine. The exact effects on shark behavior are unknown. Similar problems can be observed with pharmaceutical drugs. One Australian study involved exposing guppies to various levels of Prozac found in water supplies. The effects of exposure to the highest concentrations were particularly pronounced in male aggression, physical traits, and reproduction over multiple generations. Individuals were encouraged not to flush unused medications down the toilet but many of the detectable medications find their way into the water supply primarily through waste processing.

EXCLUDING THE RIGHT

Recent European elections have shown a trend that may backfire. That is the exclusion of right-wing parties from government even when they receive the majority of votes. France's recent parliamentary elections are an interesting example. The French engage in two rounds of voting unless a candidate receives more than 50% of the vote. All who receive more than 12.5% participate in round two. President Macron called a snap election this summer that did not work out well for his party. During the second round of voting, he made an unholy alliance with a conglomeration of left-wing parties organized under the heading "New Popular

Front." The grouping (NFP) contains almost 60 like-minded parties including the Socialists, Greens, Communists, etc. Their deal was to pull candidates from the runoff races in order to present only one alternative to the surging National Rally party headed by Marine Le Pen, which had garnered the largest share of votes in the first round. They also secured the largest number of votes in the second round but came in third in regards to seats won once broken down by district.

The results have been borderline catastrophic, with Macron sacrificing his party's performance to prevent a more conservative majority. It took over two months for him to nominate a Prime Minister with the potential to survive an immediate vote of no confidence. Michel Barnier will take on the role, a veteran politician who formerly served as the EU's negotiator on Brexit. German state elections saw similar results, with the AfD taking a majority in Thuringia and performing well in Saxony and other regions but being universally excluded from governing coalitions. The habitual exclusion of right-wing parties, or political maneuverings like those that precluded Geert Wilders from becoming Prime Minister of the Netherlands and led to six months of coalition negotiations, may backfire given time. Such tactics have a tendency to legitimize the victims and lend credence to opposition views as opponents resort to politics to prevent the expressed will of the people from having a proportional share in government.

BYE, BYE DEI?

That's the case for a host of major corporations that have ended DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) programs, canceled associated budgets, removed hiring quotas and quit participating in

monitoring efforts. The reason? Not many are keen to say, but they include cost, effectiveness and customer backlash. Despite warnings from activists that companies will miss out on top talent, it's hard to imagine how hiring and promoting based on merit could yield that result. Notable names that have ended the practice include John Deere, Lowe's, Ford, Harley-Davidson, Starbucks and Coors.

LET THEM EAT BUGS

Singapore has legalized the commercial sale and consumption of 16 varieties of bugs. The shock factor has seen restaurants rushing to demo creepy crawly culinary creations, but the ick factor may say "nighty-night" and put these bugs to bed. According to the UN and other "progressive" think tanks like the WEF, the largest obstacle to be overcome is disgust. Amen to that. Protein content aside, grubs, moths and meal worms need not apply, according to THE Book. However... "Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind. But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you" (Lev. 11:21-23).

EGYPT

Its importance cannot be overemphasized. Controlling the only border with Gaza outside of Israel, Egypt has been crucial to maintaining stability in the region for decades. However, as a nation, Egypt has come under increasing pressure. The Houthi's attacks on shipping in the Red Sea have jeopardized revenues from the Suez Canal. Currency concerns, inflation and the cost of energy subsidies have left the country struggling. Egypt has received support from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and even Libya despite domestic turbulence of its own. Like Libya, Egypt's neighbor Sudan has also been divided by a brutal civil war.

Upstream, Egypt has had conflict with Ethiopia over a massive hydroelectric dam constructed on the Nile. This has indirectly contributed to Egyptian weapons and potentially troops being deployed to Somalia, displacing Ethiopian assets

in a struggle for regional influence. Further afield, there has been some rapprochement between Egypt and NATO member Turkey for the first time in over a decade. This as Turkey seeks to repair relations with many Islamic and Arab League nations while preventing NATO cooperation with Israel. Perhaps to ensure Egypt's loyalty, the US has since gifted \$1.3 billion in military aid. This includes funds formerly withheld over human rights issues.

DEMOGRAPHIC COLLAPSE

Childless cat ladies can say what they will, population statistics are frightening experts for the future of society as we know it. Developed nation's socialized retirement programs cannot be sustained. In Europe, the 2.2 to 1 ratio of workers to beneficiaries is expected to crater to 1.4 to 1. Immigration is not enough to offset the decline. And that option has become even less palatable thanks to migrant incidents like the recent stabbing in Germany or the apartment complex takeover in Colorado. The situation in the far east is even more grim. China has abruptly ended adoption programs that transfer children to foreign nations and raised the national retirement age. Even the Pope, on tour through Asia, saw fit to praise the demographics in Indonesia saying, "Keep it up you're an example for everyone, for all the countries that maybe, and this might sound funny, these families prefer to have a cat or a little dog instead of a child."

CRIME TIME

We know that theft and shoplifting have been out of control in the US, but the phenomena is not unique to this country. Government statistics in the UK saw theft increase by a third in the past 12 months. It is also accepted that many incidents are not reported. Laughably tragic, the MP Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention actually had her purse stolen while attending a meeting of police chiefs called to address the problem.

Decades of lax immigration policy in Sweden has been blamed for an explosion in gang activity, leading the nation's neighbors to join forces in an attempt to contain the problem. It has become increasingly common for minors to be recruited online, often out of state run orphanages for unaccompanied minors, to commit crimes including

murder. These activities are often coordinated from overseas and reflect imported gang rivalries. This has led to increased border checks, undermining the Schengen area and the unity that comes with free travel inside the EU.

Germany has instituted border checks with all its neighbors following a public outcry over murders by a Syrian migrant they had already attempted to deport and that was claimed by Islamic State. The move has angered its allies, but the political reality necessitates action of some sort as the ruling coalition has heretofore failed to address public concern. They have gone so far as to suggest a deportation scheme to Rwanda along the lines of that scrapped by Britain's new Labor government.

WAGNER

The infamous mercenary group has not been completely disbanded despite the suspicious demise of leader Yevgeny Prigozhin after his coup-like assault towards Moscow. Much of the force was absorbed into the regular Russian military but many regiments are still active in Africa under the guise of the Africa Corp. The moniker evokes Germany's Rommel in WW2, but it has been repurposed for Russia's involvement on the continent. Countries that have undergone recent coups, like Niger and Mali, have expelled Western forces and invited Russian mercenaries in to help combat Islamic insurgents. Many instances have not gone well for the new arrivals, with a notable defeat and several prisoners taken last July in Mali. African frustration with the inability of their allies to eliminate the threat continues to mount. The reality on the ground necessitates continued cooperation however, like the halted withdrawal of UN troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

FALTERING?

China's economic growth has long been the envy of the world. Hitting or approaching double digit GDP percentage increases since 2000, figures have been trending downward since 2010 but still attaining nearly 7%. Despite weathering COVID without the economy contracting, the manufacturing powerhouse has still suffered from the woes of inflation, trade pressures and a domestic property crisis. Observers fear China will now miss a growth

target of 5% for 2024, a statistic that has already been revised downward. It is commonly believed that many of China's industries are already overcapacity, resulting in a flood of underpriced goods that Western nations have attempted to protect their markets and producers from through tariffs. Cars, particularly electric ones, are a prime example.

While China still has a great deal of potential growth in their domestic market, the outlook has been alarming enough to elicit discussions of cash stimulus payments to the population, though most doubt such action will transpire. China has also threatened to reciprocate for Western tariffs and sanctions in an attempt to make foreign governments think twice before applying them. Additionally, efforts have been made to expand into new markets, such as adding Brazil to the Belt-and-Road initiative or the \$51 billion worth of infrastructure projects China has committed to building (and financing) in Africa over the next several years.

EUROPE GIRDS FOR WAR

Events have forced Europe to consider the potential reality of a war with Russia. Beyond complaining of Trump's harsh rhetoric, NATO allies have had to tumble to the reality that the established 2% minimum spending on defense may not even be enough. Analysis has shown the continent is woefully unprepared. Shortfalls in manpower and equipment are being realized. Plans are being formed for the smallest logistical details in the event of a real conflict. Costs are a struggle; troop recruitment is a struggle. With debt concerns a top priority, there is little appetite for increases in defense spending that are nevertheless deemed necessary. This as many economic mainstays, such as German industry, falter.

EU President Ursula von der Leyen said, "We must think about our union as intrinsically a security project." While encouraging cooperation on the EU level, they have also sought to encourage US backing through NATO. German naval assets have traversed the Taiwan Strait, a show of solidarity as US attention has been drawn eastward. Germany has also begun constructing a military base in Lithuania, virtually on the border with Belarus. The US has also been willing to provide financing to those willing to step up their efforts, such as a \$2 billion loan to Poland for advanced military equipment. □

END OF DAYS

by Tracy Grant, CVCOG.org

With all the troubling news we see every day, it can be hard to place the evils within modern society alongside just where we are in the Bible's prophetic timeline. Just what does the record of scripture say about the days we are currently living in? Let's go to the words of Jesus Christ. First, a portion of the Olivet prophecy Jesus gave in Matthew 24:36-38 (NASB throughout), which reads, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the son, but the Father alone. 37 For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark."

So, during the decades that it took Noah to build the ark, the people of the area continued in their everyday activities. They watched Noah, a man of righteousness, and his family build the ark. Meanwhile, what was the condition of mankind at this time? Let's go to Genesis 6:5-6, which reads, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He

was grieved in His heart."

Sadly, the condition of mankind will be the same just before the return of Jesus Christ at His second coming to establish the Kingdom of God right here on this earth.

Also recorded in Luke 17:28-30 we read, "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating and drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; 29 But on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed."

What was the condition of Sodom in Lot's time? Let's look at Genesis 13:13 which reads, "Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD." Then read Genesis 19 and you will see Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed mainly for their sexual sins.

So again, we see just before the return of Jesus Christ the condition of mankind is quite evil. Today, mankind is going about life, working, marrying, buying and selling, going to sporting events, concerts, political events, traveling, going on vacations, etc., and there are great evils surrounding us that



our Great God hates. These evils are present today, as they were before the events described by Christ.

Here is an example of evil that will display that we are at the "end of days." This evil is against the most innocent of mankind, children! Every year there are 73 million abortions worldwide, according to the World Health Organization. That is 200,000 a day, globally. In the year 2020, there were 930,160 abortions in the United States. That is 2,548 every day in the United States alone. Let's call this what it is, murder of unborn children. Sadly, this has become so accepted in our societies it hardly gets any coverage in the mainstream legacy media. This alone is evil beyond belief for most of us.

The evil doesn't stop there. Their body parts are sold to scientists at major universities and government labs which have been using fetal tissue for decades. According to *The Seattle Times*, the NIH (National Institutes of Health) spent \$76 million on research using fetal

tissue in 2014 with grants to 50 universities. This evil continues today in the USA and other countries around the world. In our day, abortion and the selling of body parts from murdered babies is a worldwide evil. The stench of this evil has reached God's Throne just as the evil in Noah's day did.

God hates murder and the deaths of the innocent unborn. Let's look at what scripture says regarding just what God Almighty hates. Proverbs 6:16-19, "There are six things that the Lord hates, Seven that are an abomination to Him: 17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, **And hands that shed innocent blood**, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, 19 A false witness who declares lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers" (emphasis added). Yes, God hates the shedding of innocent blood and that includes everyone associated with the entire abortion industry, pure evil in all its ways. We cannot water this down. We must call it out for the abomination it is.

Just the other day I read there are currently 500,000 unaccompanied children that crossed our porous border during the past 3 ½ years and are missing in the United States. Most are believed to have been given over to child sex trafficking rings operating in the US and, for the most part, no government agency is looking for them.

The rise in adult pedophiles in all countries has increased in the past ten years and many of these pedophiles are not even

trying to hide their perversion any longer. They are right out in the open with it at yearly "pride" events across the country. They try to normalize it by saying, "child attracted adult" or "minor attracted person." Let's call it what it is, perversion and evil!

There are currently around 130 hospitals/medical centers in the US that will provide surgery, to forever change a young child's life, by removing breasts of young girls and performing genital mutilation, due to gender dysphoria. What ever happened to the doctor's creed, "First Do No Harm"? The doctors and other medical personnel that do these procedures are evil and wicked.

Across the US, in most of the school districts of our major cities, teachers will encourage their students to question their God-given sex at birth. They are nothing more than child sex groomers.



Much hulabaloo was made over the death of Sphen, an allegedly gay penguin, in an Australian zoo. The accusation was made after he and another male penguin built a nest and were celebrated by those bent on promoting their own perversion.

Continued next page

boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.”

There are many other areas of evil/wickedness that cause the children of this nation and the world to become victims. No doubt you could list out others yourself. I am going to mention several other areas of wickedness that our Great God sees mankind committing such as murder, rape, theft, human smuggling, kidnapping, adult sex trafficking, drug trafficking, drug use, alcohol abuse, robbery, injustice in the land, lying, false witness, sexual perversion, multiple millions of criminal invaders in the US and

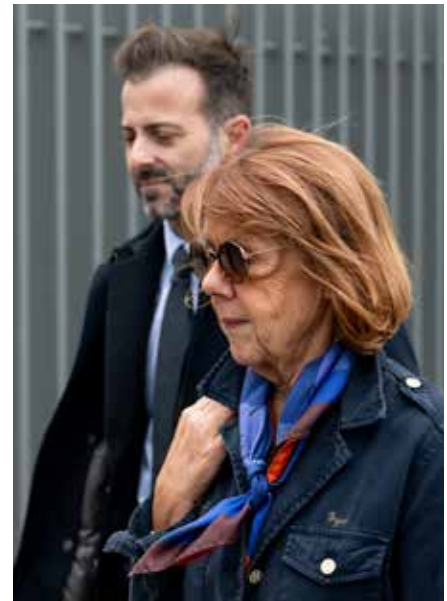
Europe, etc. I know you see what I am pointing out.

Do we sigh and cry for the evil abominations in our day? Read for yourself Ezekiel chapter 9. If you sigh and cry for the abominations listed in this article, the writer with the inkhorn mentioned in Ezekiel will put a mark from the LORD on you. You will be spared God’s coming wrath in the Day of the LORD. You will notice in verse 6 the LORD says, “...and you shall start at My sanctuary.” Today that would mean starting with the “people of God.” God’s saints, chosen ones, called out from this present evil age to be a follower of “the Way” (Acts 9:2).

If you are reading and coming to an understanding of the articles contained in the *21st Century WATCH*, searching the scriptures daily, and have not yet been baptized, now is the time for you to change your life. Christ

stated in Mark 1:15, “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel.” In Acts 2:38, “Peter said to them, ‘Repent and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Time is getting short! The troubling events of the Great Tribulation are on the horizon and just afterwards, at the appointed time, Father God will send His son to this earth in great glory and power. His son, Jesus Christ, along with the saints (changed to spiritual members of the family of God) will usher in the 1000-year reign of the Kingdom of God. No longer will we see these evils committed against the innocent unborn and young children. Evil and wickedness will not be allowed in the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ will rule with a rod of iron (Rev 19:15). □



Recent high-profile cases have put the spotlight on the depths of depravity that exist in society. The developing story around Sean “Diddy” Combs may ensnare many well-known figures while the case of Gisele Pelicot, who was drugged by her husband and raped by at least 50 strangers he recruited over the course of a decade, is virtually too awful to contemplate.

The Power of One

Continued from page 2

that He forebears from punishing us in the moment and with the severity that our actions often warrant. When we are grieved that He has not intervened to prevent many of the evils we see in society. Perhaps it would be good to remember that He has been equally patient with us.

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:10-14).

This is all the more reason to seize the opportunity to make tomorrow better than today! Take hold of God’s promises, accept His offer of mercy and be merciful to others in turn. Leave the problems of the past in the past. Its wars and hatreds, its cycles of violence and abuse have no place in tomorrow.

You may feel alone, isolated or insignificant. Remember, for the sake of ten righteous people God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:32). Elijah thought he alone was left, but God comforted him with the knowledge of new kings, a successor, and the fact that 7,000 people remained who had not bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:14-18). No person is insignificant. We all have a

role to play in God’s plan.

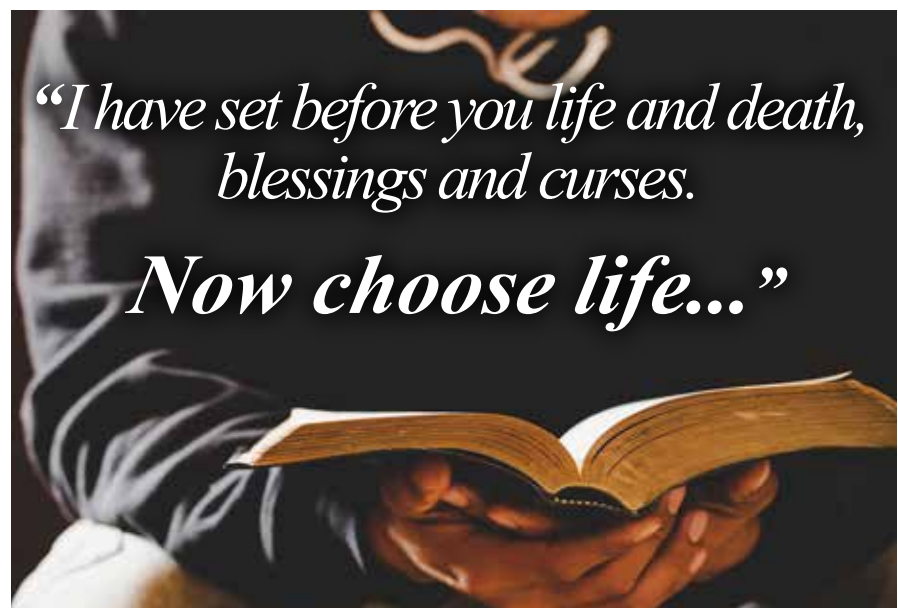
Leadership can have an exaggerated impact, but ultimately it is composed of individuals with the same responsibility towards law and righteousness. Nor can we neglect our role in selecting or empowering those who rule. Moses told the people to seek out those with wisdom and understanding to be made captains and officers (Deuteronomy 1:12-14). Later, Israel rejected the sons of Samuel as judges because they “... turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment” (1 Samuel 8:3). They demanded a king at the same time, creating an overpowered executive role that God warned them they would come to regret. Isaiah lamented, “they which lead thee cause thee to err” (Isaiah 3:12).

Impact increases with office. Still, blame is unproductive. You can appoint a new captain, but the ship will continue sinking until the hole in its bottom is fixed. The same goes for society; wanting it to be better is not enough. You can either be part of the problem

or the solution. Christ said, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

You may think you don’t have much to offer or you may have some big changes to make. Even the smallest kindness, word of encouragement, forgiveness asked or given, or sympathetic friend could mark a turning point for yourself or someone else. But by no means can we be the ones to perpetuate evil! There are enough problems already. We have all suffered too much. Forgive and you shall be forgiven (Luke 6:37). Commit to not repeating the past! Tomorrow can and will be better if we can muster the courage to take responsibility for ourselves!

This issue of *21st Century WATCH* highlights the kind of impact that one person can have. From the smallest decision all the way up to the moral disputes that grip the nation, overt political violence, and the perpetuation of ancient hatreds. We each have a unique opportunity to stop these problems in their tracks. □



*“I have set before you life and death,
blessings and curses.*

Now choose life...”

BIBLE STUDY*by Dr. James & Natalie Ricks*


DOES IT MATTER IF CHRIST WAS BORN ON DECEMBER 25TH?

WAS CHRIST REALLY BORN ON DECEMBER 25TH?

If society is no longer interested in Christ, then most would not care. Many would say that Christmas on any date would be a chance for extreme materialism and partying. The fastest growing segment in surveys of religion in America is not Islam — it is the “Nones.” The “Nones” are those with NO religious beliefs at all. They have no church affiliation. But true believers should care very much about biblical truth!

The Roman Universal Church decided to place the date of Christ’s birth on the same day of PAGAN sun god worship as a method of converting the pagans in the Roman Empire to Christianity. This was the primary motive for the December 25th date. Could this possibly be the date of Jesus’ birth as well? No! Absolutely not! Evidence does exist regarding the birth of Christ and it PROVES otherwise. December 25th is the day of the pagan winter solstice celebration and is based on the primitive superstitious fear of losing sun light and sun worship.

Jeremiah 10:2, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at

the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are dismayed at them.’” (NKJV)

God said that His people were not to fear the sun, moon and stars of heaven, nor worship them as the pagan nations that do not know God. The early true church never made mention of Christmas. Centuries passed before the large apostate church ever so gradually began adapting and blending in pagan practices. Later, some writers began urging a celebration at the same time as the pagan winter solstice observances.

Deuteronomy 12:30-31, “Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ 31 You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.” (Note that the more progressive parts of America are eager to abort babies.)

Each year, articles appear at Christmas time cheerfully admitting that the true origins of the celebration are pagan. It is a tradition from the ancient past. Further, such articles also admit the pagan origin of the Christmas tree, “mistletoe, holly wreaths, yule logs.” The excessive “gift giving

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has become extensive and like extortion.” The commercialization of the season does not bring us closer to Christ.

Deuteronomy 12:32, “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

Of course, God is correct in having believers avoid all kinds of pagan additions to the true worship of Him.

THE PRIESTLY DIVISIONS PROVIDE PROOF OF THE TRUE SEASON OF CHRIST’S BIRTH

There are some VITAL pieces of evidence we must understand. They begin with the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, who was Jesus’ second cousin and the “voice in the wilderness” who would announce the coming of the Messiah.

Luke 1:5-14, “There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah... 8 So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division...13 the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.’”

The events in the order of his course as priest at the Temple offer the best evidence of Jesus’ real birth date! As a good historian, Luke provides vital information and an orderly account of the time period surrounding Christ’s birth. First, in a long section from Luke 1:5-8 to 2:8, Zachariah the priest was of the priestly course of Abia or Abijah. (See 1 Chronicles 24:10.) This would be in the summer.

Luke 1:26-34, “Now in the sixth month [of Elizabeth’s pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary... 34 Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’”

A second great miracle is about to begin. One miracle was for the elderly parents to have John

the Baptist. The next is for Mary to have a son by immaculate conception.

Verse 35, “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is NOW IN THE SIXTH MONTH for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.’”

After Zacharias returned home, his elderly wife Elizabeth became pregnant. His son John was born six months before Jesus. Note Luke 1:26-38. This means Jesus Christ would have been born in the Fall. The Bible has Fall and Spring Holy Days to celebrate Christ. The evidence is below:

1. The priestly course of Abijah ends in June/July. John the Baptist’s mother was impregnated then.
2. Wait nine months from summer and John is born in the springtime, around March/April.
3. John is six months older than Jesus Christ therefore add six months and Jesus is born in the Fall.

A second point is that the sheep were outside at night when Christ was born inside. It would be too cold to have sheep AND shepherds outside at night in the fields in the DEAD of winter.

Luke 2:8-11, “Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.”

IS PUBLIC SECULARIZATION OF CHRISTMAS A GOOD THING?

Most in academia have turned toward a winter solstice only and do not allow any biblical manger scenes. This move is toward a more pure, global, open paganism. Pagans worship nature and mother earth (i.e., GLOBAL WARMING) and sun worship fits into this system.

If America has true religious freedom, then

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people have a right to be wrong! We should especially not support the more recent push to celebrate the winter solstice holiday while forbidding any mention or depiction of baby Jesus in the public square. It is only a holiday season to them (similar to pagan Rome). It makes the “winter break,” as higher education labels it now, even more purely pagan by eliminating any thought of our newborn Savior and God.

It would be best as in colonial days, when Christmas was not a national holiday and it was illegal to eliminate it. However, the modern PC world’s push to eliminate the manger scene is worse. This will weaken society even further and make us even more aligned with paganism.

Jeremiah 7:6, “If you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt...”

CHRIST’S FOLLOWERS OBSERVED GOD’S HOLY DAYS

Rejection of Christianity is one of the most negative trends in our society. The Bible emphatically supports the celebration of Christ’s death, and His

resurrection.

Acts 18:21, “But took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.’”

Acts 20:6, “But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days...”

Matthew 26:18, “And He said, ‘Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, ‘My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.’””

1 Corinthians 5:6-8, “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

True believers should follow the biblical examples and celebrate Christ’s second coming in the Fall (Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles) and His first coming as our sacrificial Lamb (New Testament Passover/Lord’s Supper & Unleavened Bread) during the spring Holy Days. □



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What Are The Odds?

by John Phillips

Have you ever asked yourself what the odds of you being you, are? The answer will bring you down some very geeky roads with large numbers, obviously. Using something tangible helps with wrapping our heads around some of the answers. Keep in mind, it is commonly believed that something has zero probability of occurring (or is “mathematically impossible”) at 1 in 1×10^{50} (that’s 1 with 50 zeros behind it).

So, let us start out with a simple 52 card deck. Have you ever heard of the term 52 factorial? Well, that is the mathematical equation of the number of possible outcomes you will get when you shuffle a deck of cards. The 52 factorial equals 8.0658×10^{67} . It is said that a 52 card deck has never been in the same order as when you last shuffled it. Never.

To express the 52 factorial in ways we might understand, Scott Czepiel, a data scientist also known as “czep,” shares insights and experiences related to data analysis, variables, and observations. He approaches analytics as a blend of science, engineering, and art. He came up with a way. The following is paraphrased from czep.net:

Stand at the equator and set a timer (in seconds) to the 52 factorial. Then...

1. Take 1 step every billion years. The equatorial circumference of the Earth is 40,075,017 meters.

2. Every time you circle the earth take 1 drop (0.05ml) of water out of the Pacific Ocean. The Pacific Ocean contains 707.6 million cubic kilometers of water.

3. Repeat 1 & 2 until the Pacific is empty.

4. Lay 1 sheet of paper down on the ground. Refill the ocean so you can start over. Add a sheet of paper to your stack each time you empty the Pacific. The thickness of each piece of paper is 0.004 inches.

5. Repeat 1 – 4 until the stack of papers reaches the sun. The distance from the Earth to the Sun is 93 million miles.

6. Take the stack down and repeat this process 1,000 times. Then look at your timer and you will see that you’re only 1/3 of the way done with 5.385⁶⁷ seconds remaining.

So you mix things up a little bit with the remaining time.

1. Deal yourself 5 cards every billion years.

2. Repeat until you get a royal flush (you are 5 times more likely to get struck by lightning than see 2 royal flushes at 1:2,598,960 for a royal flush). Then buy a mega millions lottery ticket (odds are 1:302,575,350).

3. Repeat 1-2 until you win, then place a single grain of sand in the Grand Canyon.

4. Repeat 1-3 until the Grand Canyon is filled, then remove

Continued next page

1 oz of rock from mount Everest until it's leveled. Mount Everest is said to weigh about 357 trillion pounds. Look at your timer and you still have 5.364⁶⁷ seconds remaining.

5. Repeat this 256 times and the 52 factorial clock is done!

A study from Harvard assuming 150,000 generations put a number on the odds of you being you at 1:10^{2,640,000}. They presuppose evolution of course, but even adjusted to a creation timeline it comes out to 1:10^{5,280}.

Consider this in relation to our Lord and Savior. What are

come, saith the LORD of hosts.”

3. The manner of his birth. Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

4. His betrayal by a friend for 30 pieces of silver. Zechariah 11:12-13, “And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”

5. & 6. Manner of death & the people's reaction. Psalm 22 describes his death 800 years before Rome invented it. Psalm 22:11-18, “Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

*The odds of all this happening are
1:400 quadrillion (4+17 zeros).
That's just you and your parents!*

Now, what makes this thought exercise so interesting? The odds of you being you makes 52 factorial look insignificant! You are 1 of 8 billion people on this earth. While the odds of you having a child are high in comparison, the odds of you being you are astronomically slim. While women have a set number of eggs, men can produce over a trillion sperm cells throughout their lives. Only one combination of these could have resulted in you. Any other and you would not be here.

The odds of your parents ever even meeting to begin with was 1:200 million, and that's assuming they were in the same part of the world. And then staying together long enough to even have children you have to increase that 1:200 million by a factor of 20,000.

The odds of all this happening are 1:400 quadrillion (4+17 zeros). That's just you and your parents! Now repeat that same thing going back in your family tree.

the odds of Christ being Christ? There is more to think about than just His historically verifiable existence. The Bible also gives 333 prophecies about the Messiah. About 70 major and 270 complex. The Old Testament was completed 250 years before Jesus' birth. The United States isn't even that old. Here are just 8 of them that Jesus had absolutely no control over. These are not self-fulfilling prophecies.

1. The place of his birth. Micah 5:2, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

2. The time of his birth. Malachi 3:1, “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall

7. Not having a bone broken. Psalm 34:20, “He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.”

8. His Burial. Isaiah 53:8-12, “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he

was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Dr. Stoners, head of mathematics and astronomy at Pasadena city college for years as well as Westmount college in Santa Barbara, along with 600 of his students came up with this. The odds of just these 8

prophecies happening by blind luck is $1:10^{17}$. You could cover the state of Texas 2 feet deep in silver dollars and put an “X” on one of them, blindfold someone and have them choose one. If they pick up the “X” coin on the first try, then you can say these 8 prophecies were blind luck. But wait, now realize that 29 prophecies were fulfilled in 1 day. A SINGLE DAY. Now factor in that there are over 300 prophecies about Christ.

Think of this in conclusion. The odds that creation just happened to be, on top of you being you, on top of Christ being Christ... How can anyone say that “all this is by chance?” We see that life is utterly unique. God has created us with a purpose in mind. It is not blind chance. The building blocks of just one cell are so complex science can’t ex-

God has created us with a purpose in mind. It is not blind chance.

plain how it came to be without using God as the starting point. Evolutionists jump from one theory to another like a frog in a pond. If the comparatively simple things like 52 factorial can be determined by mathematics, science, and reason then why do we try to discount God’s abilities? I guess we are not smart enough to be atheists. We accept that the sky is blue, and while we may study on why it’s blue, we don’t call it silver. □



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BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON EIGHTEEN: BIBLICAL COVENANTS

Both testaments record that God made certain promises to man in the form of specific contracts or agreements with man. These are called “covenants” and define the terms of God’s relationship with individuals or groups in various circumstances and eras. Of these covenants the best known are the covenants made with physical Israel and the New Covenant established on “better promises,” which will be fully confirmed with spiritual Israel after the return of Jesus Christ. The New Covenant, which also applies to the New Testament Church from the time of the original apostles, makes God’s law even more relevant by expanding it to include not only a person’s actions but also one’s mental attitude and spiritual intent.

DOCTRINAL OVERVIEW

In recording the history of God’s relationship to mankind, the Bible reveals various examples of covenants made between God and certain individuals or nations. A covenant may be defined as an agreement, written or verbal, whereby two or more parties agree to a certain relationship governed by specific rules and yielding commensurate results. This usually involves certain conditions to be fulfilled by one or all parties. Therefore, a covenant is most closely analogous to our present day “contract,” though any such analogy must be an oversimplification.

A contract implies a clear bilateral agreement with both (or all) sides fully agreeing to the terms. But God’s covenants are not always so bilaterally equal. In almost every situation it is God who sets all the ground rules, God who formulates all the conditions, and God who stipulates all the results. Man is simply given the choice of agreeing to comply and receiving the tremendous benefits, or not agreeing to comply, in which case he not only does not receive the benefits but suffers the terrible liabilities as well. As such, God’s covenants could

perhaps be better characterized as “promises” since they are most often unilateral. As God has defined His covenantal relationship with man, He promises to do something if man does something, and He promises to do something else if man does something else.

God’s purpose in making covenants has always been, and still is, to officially and clearly delineate what He expects from man and what man can expect from Him. By understanding these covenants an individual may come to a better knowledge of God’s will and desire for mankind and also realize the conditions which will lead to prosperity and abundance.

In the Old Testament a number of important covenants are discussed. In Genesis 9:8-17, for example, God promises Noah He will never again destroy life with a huge flood. Later on in Genesis we read how God made a covenant with Abraham — which He later reiterated and expanded — which provided physical benefits to him and eventually to all humanity through Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 15:18-21; 17:1-27). Another covenant example was the agreement God made with King David (2

Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chron. 17:11-14). To one degree or another most of the major biblical covenants interrelate and intertwine. To understand any one covenant wholly, we must usually have a working knowledge of the others. For example, the covenant God made with Abraham has as its promises certain blessings that are reiterated in whole or in part in later covenants.

The best known of the Old Testament covenants is that between God and the Israelites made at Mount Sinai. After bringing the Israelite slaves out of bondage in Egypt, God made an agreement, or covenant, with them (Ex. 19-24). In return for obedience to the Ten Commandments and other laws enumerated in Exodus 20-23, God promised certain physical blessings. Included among these were protection from enemies, removal of sickness, and abundance of food and water. Noticeably absent from among these promises was any mention of spiritual benefits, such as forgiveness of sin and eternal life. The promises of the covenant given were strictly temporal and physical, as Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 bring out in clear detail. Conversely, disobedience to these laws would be followed by curses affecting the same areas of the Israelites' physical lives as did the promises. Moses served as the mediator of this covenant, which was then ratified with the blood of animals. Despite temporary periods of relative obedience, the later history recorded in the biblical account shows the unfaithfulness of the Israelites who repeatedly broke their part of the covenant.

In the New Testament, another covenant is proposed by God to replace this old covenant that had been made with the nation of Israel. This New Covenant had already been prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and is discussed in detail in Hebrews 8:6-13. This New Covenant is to be a "better covenant" than the Old Covenant since it will be established upon "better promises" (Heb. 8:6). These "better promises" are spiritual in nature and far transcend the physical promises given to ancient Israel. These promises include: grace (unmerited favor in God's sight, demonstrated in numerous ways), forgiveness of sins, eternal life as sons in God's family, God's putting His laws into our minds and writing

them in our hearts, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and other spiritual blessings of various kinds and of inestimable value.

Through these better promises God immeasurably extends the benefits of His relationship with man. For example, by means of the Holy Spirit, it is now possible to keep the spiritual intent of the law, whereas those under the Old Covenant did not generally keep even the physical letter of the law. The New Covenant is also non-ethnic, being offered to all who repent and through baptism become Abraham's spiritual descendants and heirs (Gal. 4:28; Is. 55:1-3; 59:20-21).

The New Covenant will not be applicable in its full force and widest sense until Jesus Christ returns and establishes it with Israel. This is the clear message of the prophets. All peoples and nations of the world shall then have an opportunity to enter into this same New Covenant relationship with God, though Israel will be the international example as God's law will go forth from Zion (Micah 4). Nonetheless, since Jesus Christ is called "the mediator of the New Covenant" (Heb. 12:24), the New Covenant is already in force for all true Christians today who have accepted Him as their Savior.

The differences between the promises of the Old and New Covenants extend beyond their content — there is also a difference in the timing of their fulfillment, and this difference is instructive in further understanding the application of the New Covenant under the Old Covenant. The physical promises of blessings or cursings were fulfilled (within whatever time period) according to whether Israel obeyed or disobeyed God's law. Under the New Covenant, God's promises are surely given to His begotten children, but even such converted Christians will not receive the promises in their fulfillment until Christ's return. This event is described in I Corinthians 15:51-53 when:

"...we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality."

Indeed all the patriarchs and prophets of the

Bible have not yet had God's promises to them fulfilled:

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promises: God having provided something better for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39-40).

God has determined that He will fulfill His better promises of the New Covenant to all His people, from all the ages and eras of man, at the same time; this will be at the momentous turning point of history, the return of Jesus Christ.

It is critical to understand that the agreement and acceptance of the New Covenant commits both God and men to stricter — not lighter — terms. God is now bound to the spiritual promises mentioned above. Likewise man is more tightly bound to God's law, the Ten Commandments and Jesus' expansions of it. Far from being free from obedience to God's law, the true Christian is now more fully responsible to keep the law in its complete spirit and intent. As Jeremiah 31:33 states, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Thus God says His law shall not be done away but rather become more deeply ingrained in his people (see also Heb. 8:8ff; 10:16ff).

Note that God's writing His law "within" His people and "upon their hearts" will not be some magical transformation or mystical experience by which God will suddenly and mechanistically rewrite our brains and reprogram our minds. God, in His wisdom, has determined that true character cannot be built instantly by fiat, not even by divine fiat. While it is possible for God to command and enforce instant obedience, that is not at all the same thing as developing true godly character. Character can be defined as the internalized desire and determination to obey God, backed by the mental fortitude and resolve to in fact obey through all circumstances, however difficult. Character can only be generated by a process of conscious experience, test and trial, growth and development. God designed human beings to become His Sons; and sons must do more than just obey, they must radiate God's character from within. Consequently, under the New Covenant, God shall make His laws known and His Spirit available, enabling people to understand and keep those laws. Thus, the opportunity to enter into

the process of conversion — of living God's way throughout a long, rich physical life — will be available to all who accept the invitation to be included in the New Covenant. Today it is only available to the relative few, those who have been called out of the world by God into His Church. After the return of Christ it will be available to the vast multitudes — those comprising physical Israel, as the example, and then every other nation on earth, all people who will gladly submit themselves to God.

The fundamental unity between Old and New Covenants is an essential element in biblical understanding. The law is principally the same, created by the same God, but our relationship to it differs. The law of the Old Covenant required physical obedience and offered physical promises; the law of the New Covenant requires spiritual obedience, which is far tougher, and offers spiritual promises, which are enormously greater.

The greatest illustration showing that God's law is expanded and made more binding (rather than abrogated) by the New Testament is the "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt. 5ff). Here Christ, speaking to His disciples (who would receive God's Spirit and hence enter into a new covenantal relationship with Him), clearly told them that not one "jot or tittle" would pass from the law. (This is indeed logical since the Jesus Christ of the New Covenant is the same being who was the God of Israel in the Old Covenant. See Lesson Three: Jesus Christ.) Jesus further spoke against the concept that obedience was not necessary by saying whosoever taught this error would not be in His kingdom (Matt. 5:19). He goes even further and gives definite examples which conclusively show we must keep the Ten Commandments more strictly in their spiritual intent than under the Old Covenant. For example, the commandment against the physical act of murder is expanded to include the spiritual attitude of anger; the physical act of adultery is expanded to include the spiritual attitude of lust, etc. Clearly the concept that the law need not be kept under the New Covenant is an error. Indeed, what God is developing is an "internalization" of obedience to Him, flowing out of our own intrinsic mental character rather than through the external coercion of physical punishment.

The offer of the New Covenant to the world as a whole is a yet future event. Thus, its full effect will not occur until the return of Christ and His thousand-year reign. But God today is calling a few elect individuals to His Church and the accompanying New Covenant relationship. Upon repentance and baptism these individuals can receive God's Holy Spirit and enter into this New Covenant (Matt. 26:26-27, Heb. 10:9-10); and those who indeed will abide by its terms (acceptance of Christ's sacrifice

and God's grace, obedience, faith, etc.) shall receive its incredible promises.

God is not a God who leaves our relationship with Him to chance or doubt. He has rather formulated covenants through which He makes plain our responsibilities as Christians toward Him and His responsibility toward us. If we fulfill our responsibilities toward God, we will surely receive the abundant physical and spiritual blessings He promises. □

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SUMMARY: Read these scriptures in your own Bible:

- **Genesis 9:8-17 – Covenant with Noah.**
- **Genesis 15:18-21; 17:1-27 – Covenant with Abraham.**
- **2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14 – Covenant with King David.**
- **Exodus 19-24 – Covenant with Israel.**
- **Jeremiah 31:31-34 – New Covenant prophesied.**
- **Hebrews 8:6-13 – New Covenant discussed in New Testament.**
- **Hebrews 12:24 – Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant.**
- **1 Corinthians 15:51-53 – True Christians today will receive the promises of the New Covenant at the return of Christ.**
- **Matthew 5:19 – The Commandments must be kept.**
- **Matthew 26:26-28; Hebrews 10:9-10 – Upon repentance, baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, individuals can enter the new covenant.**

Continued next page

QUESTIONS (ANSWERS BELOW):

1. A covenant may be defined as an agreement, written or verbal, whereby two or more parties agree to a certain relationship governed by specific rules and yielding commensurate results. True or False?
 2. In a covenant, God and man are equal partners in the agreement. True or False?
 3. In a covenant, who sets the rules, conditions and results?
 - a) Man
 - b) God
 - c) Both man and God
 4. If man chooses not to comply with a covenant...
 - a) nothing happens.
 - b) he still receives the blessings of the covenant.
 - c) he suffers the terrible liabilities of the covenant.
 5. The purpose of covenants are...
 - a) to show what God expects of man.
 - b) to show man what he can expect of God.
 - c) to give man a better understanding of God's will.
 - d) to show the conditions which lead to prosperity and abundance.
 - e) all of the above.
 6. Most covenants in the Bible are interrelated. True or False?
 7. The covenant with Israel included spiritual benefits, including forgiveness of sins. True or False?
 8. The New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant made with Israel. True or False?
 9. The New Covenant contains "better promises" than the Old Covenant. True or False?
 10. The New Covenant is offered to...
 - a) Jews only.
 - b) all the tribes of Israel.
 - c) the descendants of Abraham.
 - d) everyone.
 11. The New Covenant is now fully confirmed and applicable in its full force. True or False?
 12. However, the New Covenant is in force for all true Christians today. True or False?
 13. True Christians today will not receive the promises of the New Covenant until the return of Christ. True or False?
 14. God will fulfill the promises of the New Covenant to all His people, from all ages and eras of man...
 - a) at different times.
 - b) at the same time.
-

15. Under the New Covenant, Christians are now more fully responsible to keep the Law in its complete spirit and intent. True or False?
16. How does one develop or gain Godly character?
 - a) Allow God to mechanistically rewrite their brains and reprogram their minds
 - b) By a process of conscious experience, test and trial, growth and development
17. Today the process of conversion is available to a relative few. True or False?
18. After the return of Christ, salvation will be available to everyone who has ever lived. True or False?
19. The Law of the Old Covenant required physical obedience and offered physical promises. The Law of the New Covenant requires spiritual obedience and offers spiritual promises. True or False?
20. With the New Covenant...
 - a) the Law no longer needs to be obeyed.
 - b) the Law remains the same as under the Old Covenant.
 - c) the Law is expanded and made more binding.
21. Today God is calling a few elect individuals to His church and the accompanying New Covenant relationship. True or False?
22. God has formulated covenants which...
 - a) make plain our responsibilities as Christians toward Him.
 - b) make plain God's responsibility toward us.
 - c) both.

LESSON EIGHTEEN — ANSWERS:

- | | | |
|------------|---|------------|
| 22. (c) | 15. (true) | 8. (true) |
| 21. (true) | 14. (b) | 7. (false) |
| 20. (c) | 13. (true) | 6. (true) |
| 19. (true) | 12. (true) | 5. (e) |
| 18. (true) | 11. (false – not until Christ's return) | 4. (c) |
| 17. (true) | 10. (d) | 3. (b) |
| 16. (b) | 9. (true) | 2. (true) |
| | | 1. (true) |



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