

A dramatic landscape photograph featuring a dirt road that stretches from the foreground into the distance, flanked by green and yellow fields. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, and several bright, jagged lightning bolts are visible, illuminating the scene. The overall mood is powerful and intense.

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**“THE LORD IS SLOW TO ANGER,
AND GREAT IN POWER, AND WILL
NOT AT ALL ACQUIT THE WICKED...”
NAHUM 1:3**

HE THAT HATH EARS TO HEAR... LET HIM HEAR

by Michael Armstrong

As this issue of *21st Century WATCH* magazine heads to print, we are entering into the fall Holy Day season. What could be a more stark reminder of the world in which we live? Christians are largely oblivious. Jews remember (sort of), but reject Jesus. Yet, we know that the true saints know the commandments of God AND have the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 12:17, 14:12).

Where is the memory of God? Not just what He has done but what He has instructed *us* to do? Christ told His disciples, the night before He was crucified, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). That statement is as relative today as the day He made it.

By ignoring it, we are “cruising for a bruising,” so to speak. “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them” (Hosea 13:6-8).

These are not idle threats. God does not desire to punish mankind, but at some point evil will become so prevalent and grotesque that He will be forced to intervene. It will be necessary to save the few righteous people left.

Consider His words seriously, personally. How many reject God outright? How many more talk about the Lord and yet substitute their own ideas for His righteousness? “Not every

one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Therein lies part of the problem. Most are not even aware of *what sin is*; as if it is just anything that is obscurely bad. No, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: **for sin is the transgression of the law**” (1 John 3:4). It is not some relative moral judgment each of us gets to make in real time and later justify by explaining “why” or “how” it came to be. God’s standard is immutable, eternal.

And that’s only the “things not to do” side. Christ laid more than that on each and every one that hears His words. We have an obligation and a responsibility for positive action. To care, to help, to love. Nothing less is enough. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Yet, this is a blessing. It is the positive counterpart — the good work that Christ did and has given us a part in. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke

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**“TAKE HEED THEREFORE HOW YE HEAR:
FOR WHOSOEVER HATH, TO HIM SHALL BE
GIVEN; AND WHOSOEVER HATH NOT,
FROM HIM SHALL BE TAKEN EVEN THAT
WHICH HE SEEMETH TO HAVE.”**

LUKE 8:18

unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:22-27).

So which is it going to be? You can be an adversary of God or a follower and brother of Jesus Christ. God is patient. He is forgiving. But a day is coming when your decision will

have been made, if only by not taking action one way or the other. How long will He wait? Life is short, and frankly the world is moving in many alarming directions.

If you have not already decided, let this be the moment. God is calling those that hear Him, that honor and follow His words. Don’t let the truth slip away due to doubt or fear or neglect. “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7). ■

Water

by Garner Ted Armstrong

“This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood...and there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one” (I John 5:6-8).

What is the meaning of this puzzling verse? The reference to the Holy Spirit, and to the blood of Christ to atone for sins is clear. But is the reference to water merely a shadowy type of baptism? Why is water used so frequently in the Bible as a type of God’s spirit?

Just now, you are surrounded by a certain quantity of something you cannot see, feel, or smell. Water. That’s right, water, but water in the form of vapor, suspended in the air in such tiny amounts as to be invisible, and measurable only as “humidity” by meteorologists. Next to the air you breathe, (which contains at least some water in suspension), water is the most important substance for the sustaining of your life.

You are composed, mostly, of water. Our planet is the watery planet, the continents appearing from outer space as if merely islands in a vast, blue sea which covers the earth.

What is “water?” *Eau, agua, vasser*, it is called by the French, Spanish, and Germans. But what, really, is it? Where did it come from? How is it “made”?

Water is a strange substance, bound by inexorable laws which we take for granted. It exists in three distinct forms: liquid, solid, and

vapor. In its lowest form, it seeks the lowest possible level, as pulled toward the center of the earth by gravity. Thus, rivulets, creeks, streams flow down the mountains from rains and melting snows, form rivers, which flow toward the seas.

Water is the primary means of erosion, carving out vast riverbeds, canyons, depositing huge deltas of fertile, alluvial soil. Water is a vital requirement for life; a normal person can only survive a week to 10 days without it, and the longest recorded survival time on a life raft at sea without fresh water to drink is 11 days. As a solid, water forms in cracks in rocks, exerting such force as it expands that it breaks them into smaller pieces, contributing to erosion. As a liquid, water exerts a surface tension, the molecules of water clinging together tightly in an attempt to pull the mass of water into the smallest space possible. As vapor, it forms clouds; then tiny portions of vapor form larger bodies, called rain, and it drops to earth,

bringing life-giving sustenance to plants, animals, and man. Water acts according to inexorable laws.

Drop water from your hands toward the ground. Immediately, the droplets begin spinning, bending, forming, shaping, until, if sufficient space is allowed, the molecules cling so tightly together they form a perfect sphere.

The molecules of water form a surface tension, whether on a lake or pond, or in a glass. What boy is not familiar with “water skippers” and “water bugs” that seem to walk on water? Actually, there are hundreds of species of insects capable of performing such acts. Ever see a needle float? If you carefully place a needle on its side, lower it onto the surface of water in a glass, the needle will float, even though steel is much denser than water. The molecules at the surface of the water crowd together, denying entry to the needle. Many a lad has painfully experienced this tendency of water in a lake or swimming pool. A belly flop can bring a reddened patch of skin, and a stinging sensation.

Water is one of the most common of all substances, yet contains strange properties, defying seemingly established laws. For example, all liquids are capable of being compressed a little; water up to 20 percent. But when water is compressed, seven distinct forms of ice will form, depending upon the degree of compression.

Science tells us the hydrogen atom is the basic “building block” of the universe. Hydrogen mixed with oxygen at the ratio of two to one produces water. When hydrogen and oxygen are mixed together, and then ignited (by some source of heat, like a spark, match, bolt of lightning), they explode violently — and water is the result! In a spectacular disaster on May 6, 1937, the German zeppelin Hindenburg, while being anchored to its tower at Lakehurst, New Jersey, was struck by lightning. Filled with hydrogen gas (to make the huge transoceanic blimp lighter than air), Hindenburg exploded, and the resultant fire melted the huge metal girders and frame. And water cascaded from the flames — the result of the mixture of hydrogen with oxygen, and ignition.

Why does water form seven kinds of ice crystals when under pressure? Why not six, or

five, or nine? And why does water defy other conventional “laws” when it is frozen?

Ice is merely water whose molecules have stopped moving as a result of a drop in temperature below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Other liquids become more and more dense as they are frozen. Water does just the opposite! And how “fortunate”! For if water became more dense as it froze, it would freeze and then sink, so that lakes would freeze from the bottom up. Bodies of water would freeze solid, and no plant life, fish, or microorganisms could survive. There would be no life on earth if water became more dense when it freezes.

Instead, it becomes less dense than the water from which it was formed, and thus floats on water! Water expands when subjected to temperatures in either direction away from 32 degrees. When 212 degrees Fahrenheit is reached at sea level — or when the vapor pressure of the liquid equals the pressure of the atmosphere above the liquid, water “boils,” or appears to be roiling, bubbling, moving about very rapidly; emitting “steam,” or thick vapor which can temporarily be seen before it disperses into the air.

Mankind has benefited immensely from harnessing the pressure caused by steam escaping from boiling water. Huge steamships, locomotives, donkey engines, pumps, dynamos to produce electricity — hundreds of applications of the power of steam from merely boiling water have helped produce the industrial revolution, and are being used prodigiously, today. Huge coal-burning plants, some consuming as many as 200 coal cars of coal each day, boil water to produce steam to turn turbines which produce electricity.

But in order to convert water to vapor (steam), the water must absorb an enormous amount of heat. To evaporate only one pound of water, it must absorb the same amount of heat it would require to raise five and one half pounds of water from the freezing point to the boiling point. This ability to absorb heat is what gives your body its fantastically engineered cooling system. Since over two thirds of your body is composed of water, and your bloodstream is ninety percent water, your body is constantly taking in and giving off water.

When each tiny droplet of perspiration, visible or invisible, leaves your body – as occurs each day and night – it does several things. First, it carries with it heat so that the body is cooled. It also carries various poisons, salts, pollutants, thus cleansing the body's cells.

You take in about a ton of water each year. You give off the same amount. The tiny cells that make up your body are continually ingesting nutrients brought by water; carrying away wastes by water, as is true of every living thing on earth whether plant, animal, bird, or fish! The inside of plants, from huge trees to delicate African violets, is made up of thousands of little waterways which carry nutrients, and carry away wastes.

Perhaps, by understanding how much of our earth is water (three quarters of the globe), that you are more than two thirds water, you can come to understand the biblical usage of water as a type of God's Holy Spirit; as a type of life, a type of cleanliness, a type of baptism, and a type of good works.

Think about the natural cycle of water on earth. Each year, about SEVEN BILLION TONS of water comes down on the United States from rainfall. Each tiny droplet of this massive amount of moisture comes from oceans, lakes, rivers; from evaporation. No "new" water is being created. Each drop of water is as ancient as the stones in the Great Pyramid. The laws of the conservation of matter decree that water on our good, green earth is merely changed from one form to another. In the depths of the sea, there may still exist specific molecules of water which have been there from creation, from before Adam, from the time of Abraham, Moses, Christ – right down through history! Though water tends to cycle from the bottom of lakes to the top, and ocean currents exist, the water at the bottom of the deepest parts of the ocean, like the famed Mariannas Trench, are relatively undisturbed. Yet, if that water could be brought to the surface, it would evaporate into vapor, form clouds, come down as rain, and you could drink it. A part of you, therefore, is composed of matter which has always been.

Water is not being created. It is merely changed from one form to another. Nothing is lost — it is merely recycled from the oceans to the

land, to plants, animals and man; back into streams, rivers, or ground water; eventually to the oceans, and the cycle begins anew.

The Bible says a great deal about water. In Genesis 1:1, God says, "In the beginning God created [Hebrew: *Bara*] the heaven and the earth. And the earth was [became] without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep [oceans covered all the continents]. And the Spirit of God moved upon [was pondering over, brooding upon] the face of the waters..."

And God said, Let there be a firmament [a space, or expanse] in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so" (Genesis 1:1-7).

Throughout the first chapter of the Bible, we read of the massive oceans, of how the continents appeared from beneath them; how God called them "seas," and how God filled the seas and the waters with life. "And God created great whales [behemoths of the seas, or sea monsters], and every living creature that moveth [creeps, or crawls], which the waters brought forth abundantly...and God blessed them, saying, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters of the seas..." (Genesis 1:20-22).

God was determining all future history when He brought forth the land masses just as they are; when He caused Islands, continents, isthmuses, peninsulas, bays and estuaries to be formed, surrounded by water.

The oceans have currents, affected by the pull of the moon, and by the rotation of the earth. Among the most famous: the Japanese Current, the Gulf Stream, the Humboldt, and others. Few realize that London, England, lies north of Gander, Newfoundland; that if it were not for the warm waters of the Gulf Stream, which flows from near the equator past the West Indies, the coast of Florida, and across the Atlantic, England and Northwestern Europe would be virtually uninhabitable, a wasteland of pack ice and snow.

Ponder the development of civilization. In every country, on every continent, water is the primary concern. Cities developed at the

confluences of rivers, on bays and estuaries, where adequate water supplies are found. More than 90 percent of the population of Egypt lives within about 25 miles of the Nile, for example – the rest is arid desert, with a few scattered oases.

POLLUTION: THE DESTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLIES

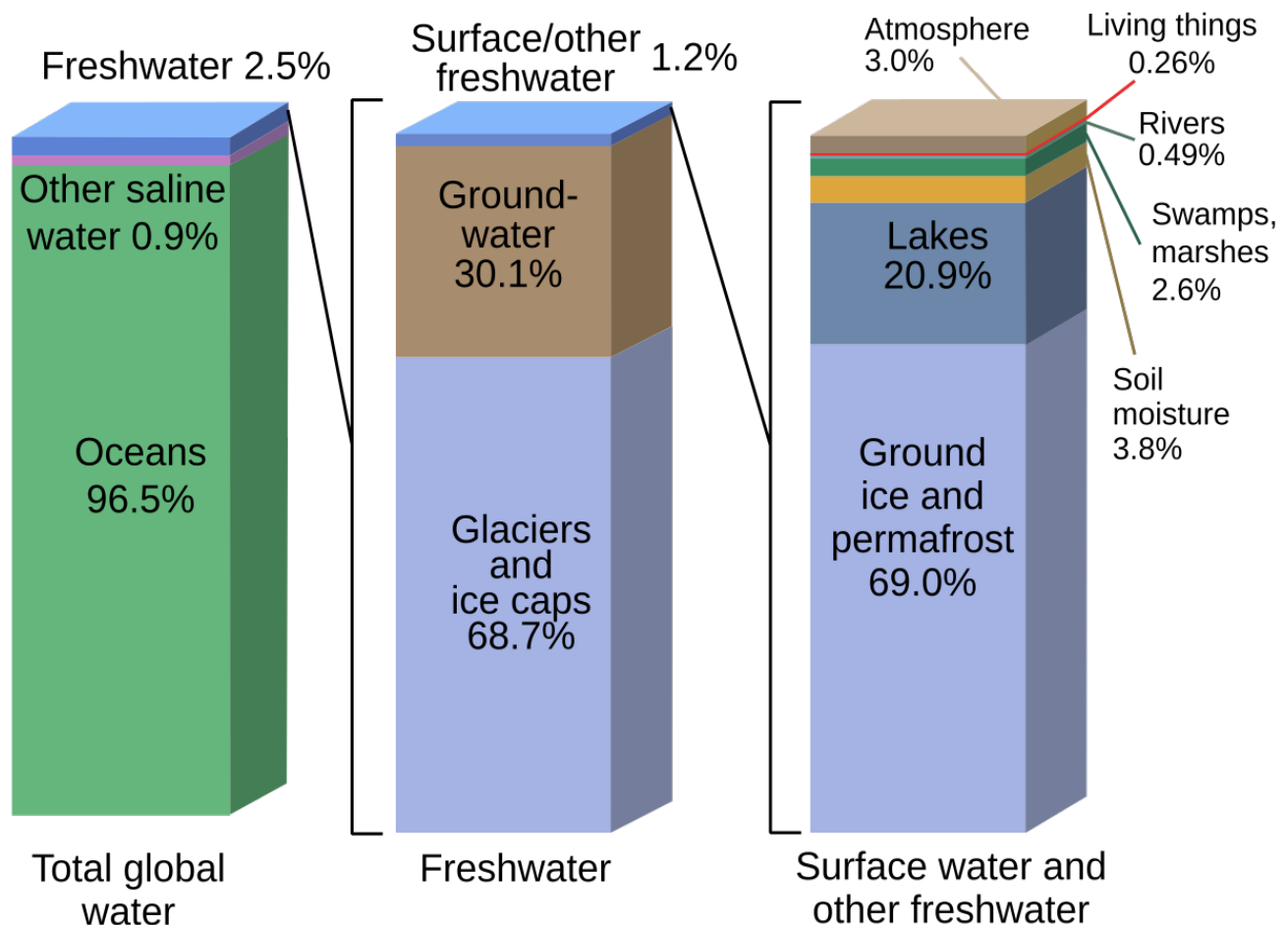
Today, man is polluting our global water supplies at an alarming rate. Global water pollution literally threatens the future of civilization itself. Each day, billions of gallons of raw sewage, industrial wastes, oil and gasoline, harmful chemicals and toxic wastes flow into the seas of the world. Most major river systems, especially in the third world countries, have become like open sewers.

Not only is man polluting the oceans and

rivers, he is also destroying his underground water supplies. Huge reservoirs of water lie beneath the soil and rocks. Scientists refer to this ground water as an “aquifer.” As water rains down upon the earth, having evaporated, mostly, from the seas, not all runs down creeks and rivers and returns to the sea. Much is absorbed in the soil and finds its way deep underground, where it can be pumped to the surface by deep water wells. But major aquifers are rapidly being depleted. As lakes and river systems shrink, salinity increases. Some species of fish have been completely eradicated from some lakes and rivers due to rising salt content.

Prodigious use of “monoculture,” the growing of single crops over large areas by irrigation, has contributed to the pollution of our aquifers. Farmers use powerful chemicals to control pests,

Where is Earth's Water?



stem rust, root rot; dump chemical fertilizers onto the fields. Runoff from such use of toxic chemicals has been proven to cause huge fish and wildlife kills.

Instead of farming as God intended — living on the land with one's family, raising a variety of crops for one's own food, plus enough with which to barter and trade — the family farm is rapidly disappearing as gigantic commercial agriculture takes over millions of acres, plants them to single crops, like soy beans, wheat, rice, barley, corn,

bacteria caused disease.

Today, many of our city water supplies have an unpleasant odor. That is because water is not only filtered, but treated with chlorine gas in small quantities. Allegedly, the amounts of chlorine are not harmful to man; are merely sufficient to kill any bacteria present. Still, many city water supplies are polluted to a greater or lesser degree. Some city dwellers would be amazed to see the accumulation of sediments and strange-colored wastes which can be filtered from their tap water.

“It is no accident that God uses water and the cleansing action of water in washing our clothing and our bodies as a type of being clean, spiritually!”

sorghum, milo, sugar beets, potatoes and a host of others. Monoculture means a lack of natural variety, and, along with it, the disappearance of hedgerows, border areas which are uncultivated; tree lines and shrubs which are haven for a myriad of species of wildlife, including game birds and deer. It also means that when a particular pest attacks a crop, it can spread like wildfire. The result? Man dumps larger and larger amounts of pesticides on the crops to protect them. The final result is pollution, not only of ground water and the soil; not only of creeks, rivers, and eventually the sea; but of man himself — from his daily ingestion of a host of chemicals.

Since water is a great natural solvent, it carries many elements in solution. Sediments and sands, clay, vegetable material, bacteria; microorganisms and tiny, freshwater shrimp might be carried along in a stream. Before the water is fit for human use, it must be cleansed of impurities. To cleanse it, it is usually filtered through sand, or charcoal, or both. Centuries ago, civilization suffered from massive disease epidemics. Many were waterborne, such as cholera, and typhoid. The reason? Man did not understand that human wastes were polluting his water supplies, that he was building his sanitary facilities over his supply of ground water, or where wastes eventually leached out into the rivers and lakes. Explosive growth of

WATER: SYMBOL OF CLEANLINESS

Every day, we all use a great deal of water. We bathe or shower in it, drink it, make coffee or tea with it, brush our teeth with it, cook our food with it, or water our lawns and gardens with it.

As a cleansing agent, water is the universal substance. Speaking of the church, Paul wrote, “...That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26-27).

God insisted that ancient Israel be clean! He said, “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Eternal” (Isaiah 52:11). Paul wrote, “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 [set apart as “holy” and “cleansed”] but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

It is no accident that God uses water and the cleansing action of water in washing our clothing and our bodies as a type of being clean, spiritually! As these and other scriptures show, the study of God's Word; hearing His Word expounded by the ministry; pondering it, meditating over it, drinking in of its meaning results in spiritual cleansing just as surely as your morning shower results in cleansing your body! David prayed, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:1-2).

Notice Paul's analogy: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [reference to the "sprinkling" of all nations by the blood of Christ: see Hebrews 9:19-20] from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). This is obvious reference to both physical and spiritual cleanliness! When Paul said the church was cleansed by the "washing of water by the Word" he was speaking spiritually, showing that the ingestion of the Word of God cleanses, purifies, carries off spiritual pollutants, as surely as pure water washes away physical impurities!

It is this double function of water that we tend to overlook. Not only must we use prodigious quantities of water, on a daily basis, to remain clean, to eat and drink, but we also are continually using water to carry poisons from our bodies, and carry bodily wastes away from our kitchens and bathrooms. So water is working in two ways. It is disposing of impurities, and it is sustaining, giving life!

Did you know that it requires 1,000 pounds of water to produce only one pound of food? That from 10 to 20 tons of water must pass through corn stalks to produce just one bushel of corn? If you consider the amount of water the grass and grain uses which cows eat, it is safe to say that it requires 15 tons of water to produce one pound of beef.

Look at the scripture first quoted again. Then turn to, and read slowly the sixth chapter of Romans. The word *baptizo* means "to plunge into water." It means to submerge, immerse! In the rite of

baptism we are not merely standing under a shower, or sitting in a tub, or using a cloth and a basin — we are buried, completely covered with this substance we call water. As Christ said, a great fish swallowed Jonah, and he was three days and three nights in the deep, covered by the ocean. Christ said He would be buried "in the heart of the earth" for the same exact period of time. Thus, the analogy of burial in water is used to symbolize our death and burial — the disappearance of the old self; and along with it, the washing away of all our sins!

Now look at the original scripture quoted again. "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Of course! For they are like one. After broken-hearted repentance, and humble acceptance of the blood of Christ to atone for sins, we then become baptized, buried in a watery grave, which symbolizes not only burial and resurrection, but complete washing. We then rise to live in "newness of life" drinking in (an apt analogy) of the written word of God, which continues the washing, cleansing process; not only giving life, refreshing, rejuvenating, sustaining, but also carrying away impurities!



Once, a lady came to me to ask help. She was having problems with contrary thoughts, temptations, even the temptation to curse the name of God. I explained that many humans experience

this, that it is more prevalent than many realize, that demons would like to implant such thoughts in our minds. I told her to read more of the Bible; to think on what she read; to open the Psalms, get on her knees, and pray David's prayers out loud to God. For I knew that the answer to getting contrary thoughts out is to put positive thoughts in.

Turn to and read the account of Jesus' encounter with the Gentile woman by the well (John 4:1-26). After Jesus asked her for a drink, and she replied in astonishment that a Jew should ask a Samaritan woman for a drink, He said, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that

others, productive work, the shining light of a really inspiring example will be the result! An outpouring of spiritual goodness will flow from those who are "drinking in" of God's Spirit!

Water should not be taken for granted. It is a symbol of life, of cleanliness, of baptism, and burial of the old self; it is the symbol of God's Holy Spirit! No wonder Jesus cried out, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled!" (Matthew 5:6).

Wherever you are right now, you are composed of about three quarters of your body weight in water. You are surrounded by air, which

“WATER is not something we should take for granted. It is a symbol of life, of cleanliness, of baptism, and burial of the old self; it is the symbol of God's Holy Spirit!”

said to thee, 'Give me to drink,' thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.

"The woman said unto Him, 'Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?'...Jesus... said unto her, 'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life!'" (Verses 10-14).

Later, on the Last Great Day of the feast, Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink! He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water!" (John 7:37-39).

Do you understand? He was saying that those of us who can truly drink in of Christ, allowing Him to live His life within us — those who are daily drinking in of God's Word through prayer, study, meditation, yes, and sometimes fasting and prayer — then "oceans" of goodness; of meekness, gentleness, faith; of good deeds toward

contains a certain amount of vapor — merely water, in minute amounts, unseen. Now, think on Paul's statement to the Areopagites: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needeth any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood [which is mostly water] all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: for IN HIM WE LIVE, AND MOVE, AND HAVE OUR BEING..."

As you are surrounded by air, which contains water; as you are composed, to about three quarters of your body weight by water, so you need to realize the closeness of God; the power of His Spirit to heal, and cleanse, and carry away our sins and impurities; the power of His Spirit to give us life, not only now, but for ALL ETERNITY! 

Origin *of* Nations

THE BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES • OUR HERITAGE • GOD'S PLAN FOR ALL



Chapter One

by Craig M. White, *FriendsofSabbath.org*

The purpose of this article is to provide the reader a basic framework to understand the meaning of Genesis 10 (the Table of Nations), the importance of the names it contains and the origin of nations.

The powerful God of the universe, Who created all that is, inspired the Bible in its entirety from Genesis to Revelation. In it are precious gems of truth laid deep inside for us to dig out. He has constructed a work, the Word of God, which is designed to exercise the human mind with the express purpose of ensuring that we inculcate within us His ways and thoughts. However, given all of the above, is it really important to understand and does it expand our knowledge of the Gospel? Indeed, is this chapter a part of the Gospel message in any way? Dr. John Pilkey thinks so:

“The descent of the nations from Noah is an interpretive crux intimately related to the evangelical Gospel” (An open letter of introduction in *Project Genesis 10*, No. 1, p. 4).

Further, Genesis 10 continues the story of

people God has decided to covenant with — that is, to enter into a relationship by creating the ground rules. He chooses whom He wishes to covenant with; mankind cannot choose to covenant with Him. As such, He selects His covenant people based on criteria He, in His wisdom, knows.

However, before discussing Genesis chapter ten, let us briefly encounter Noah’s Flood and also his three sons. Who they were and what can be learned from their names and their sons and grandsons’ names — can their meaning have anything to do with modern nations?

ALL NATIONS DESCENDED FROM ADAM AND NOAH

All races of mankind have the same parents: Adam and Eve. According to Genesis 5:4-5, Adam and Eve had various sons and daughters (Josephus records the Jewish tradition that there were 33 sons and 23 daughters in all).

Undoubtedly, God created within Eve ova (egg cells) for each major race to ensure human diversity.

Continued next page

Thus, Adam and Eve's children would have married each other, as there were no others to marry. They would have gravitated automatically to someone of like characteristics (skin color, physiognomy or behavioural patterns). Over time their descendants would have separated out into different races and nations, marrying into their own unique stock. A similar situation evidently arose again after the flood of Noah where the various races, sub-races and nations gradually developed as they inbred to create certain characteristics and natures in each. It was not wrong in the misty past for one to marry a close relative. Abram married his half-sister, Sarai (Genesis 20:12, 11:27-29) and Nahor married his niece, Milcah (Genesis 11:27-29).

Later God forbade such marriages as by then national characteristics were fully developed. Such unions had also become harmful genetically and socially and were therefore to be considered as "sin" with subsequent punishments (Leviticus 18:1-18). As such, all nations extant on the earth today may be traced clear back to Genesis 10 — the table of nations.

THE TABLE OF NATIONS

This unique table is found in two separate places in the Bible — Genesis 10 and 1 Chronicles 1 — it is the key to understanding national history and prophecy. As such, it would behoove us all to read through these two chapters thoroughly. Further, it may be appropriate to consider what experts have to say on this important subject and I have several quotes following.

Professor Albright, a leading authority on Middle East archaeology wrote the following about this wonderful table:

"It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature without a remote parallel even among the Greeks ... The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document ... [it] shows such remarkable 'modern' understanding of the ethnic and linguistic situation in the modern world, in spite of all its complexity, that scholars never fail to be impressed with the author's knowledge of the subject." (Walter Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 4) [emphasis mine]

Von Fange adds to this: "The Table of Nations

found in Genesis 10 is the most remarkable of all ancient genealogical documents," (*Table of Nations*, unpublished paper, p. 1) and, "This chapter contains **the oldest known ethnographic document in existence**. It identifies, using location, language, or descent, the tribal groups that became the peoples of the world known in ancient times. Modern research has shown this table of nations to be a strikingly accurate record of nations and peoples that existed many centuries before the writing of the Old Testament." (Larry Richards, *Bible Difficulties Solved*, p. 32) [emphasis mine]

It is truly a remarkable work, unsurpassed in world history. Another historian, Professor Hannay, states:

"... the Xth Chapter of Genesis is very well known, but I venture to think that the majority of those who know it are ignorant of its real nature". (Herbert Hannay, *European and Other Race Origins*, p. xxv)

Professor Emil Kautzsch concurs:

"The so-called Table of Nations remains, according to all results of monumental explorations, **an ethnographic original document of the first rank** which nothing can replace" (Quoted by James Orr, *"The Early Narratives of Genesis"* in *The Fundamentals*, Vol. 1, p. 234) [emphasis mine].

Professor Los similarly agrees:

"The Table of Peoples of Genesis X can, in respect of its ethnological value, hardly be valued highly enough. It is therefore very interesting that the grouping of peoples into families has been effected here in a manner which was unknown to the rest of antiquity and which only our own century has come into use again with the help of comparative philology." ("The Table of Peoples of the Tenth Chapter of Genesis", *Mankind Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1967), p. 151)

Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, adds a little more to our knowledge of this mysterious "table" in his famous *Antiquities*:

"After this [Babel] they were dispersed abroad on account of the difference of their languages, and went out by colonies everywhere, and each colony took possession of that land unto which God led them, so that the whole continent was filled with them, both the inland and maritime countries."

(Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, Bk. 1, Ch. 5, para 1. Other nations are mentioned in Genesis 22:20-25; Genesis 25:1-19; 36:1-43.)

It would appear that the intent of this chapter is to inform readers of the Word that all nations descend from Noah and his three sons. And that further, God Almighty is the One who permits or even determines national destinies. The picture we get is that no matter how diverse mankind is, we all have a common origin having stemmed ultimately from Noah. See Genesis 3:20; Malachi 2:10.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise to us that the Bible contains this amazing genealogy of the family of nations as it does of others, such as 1 Chronicles 1 and Luke 1. Many societies and peoples have kept extensive genealogical records or censuses for a number of reasons (Nehemiah 7:5, 64; 12: 22-23). Similarly, God even has a Book of Life listing all of those with whom He is working (Revelation 3:5; 21:27).

God has not left out any major nation from the Genesis family tree, whether they are referred to directly or indirectly. He loves them all and no people is ignored. They are all mentioned in the Bible and history — not under their present-day names, but under their ancient names. It is a list which incorporates all of the names of actual persons, tribes and places extant at the time of writing, projected into the past, based on historical records kept by Moses, under the inspiration of God Himself. “The tribal names stand for real individuals from whom the nations were believed to have descended” (Allen Ross, “Studies in the Book of Genesis, Part 3: The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 — Its Content,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 138, No. 549 (1981), p. 34).

The great family tree from which every nation of the earth has sprung must be thoroughly understood if we are to trace each branch to their present locations. Bear in mind that it is God Who would lead them to their ultimate destinations, bless them or curse them.

Now why should this be associated with the Gospel as Dr. Pilkey maintained? It is because the Gospel concerns the future Kingdom of God on earth and the place all of the nations will have in that Kingdom. In other words, the future millennial

rule of the Messiah on earth and the glory all nations will give to God in the knowledge that He is offering them eternal life. And it has to do with all those whom God is reaching on this planet, no matter what background, who are offered salvation as a free gift, should they repent and obey Him; as well as with who will receive the birthright and rule with the Messiah (i.e., Israel).

Of further interest is that, while many historians come with some baggage and are often-times imbued with nationalism or some philosophical or political bent, they are thus biased in their historical narratives. However, it may seem remarkable to them, if only they knew, that the historian Moses, author of Genesis including chapter 10, was remarkably unbiased. He is truthful and gives us a run-down of the sins and problems of the ancestors of Israel. This incredible restraint “suggests the hand of God upon him,” writes Arthur Custance (*Noah’s Three Sons*, p. 65).

INTERPRETING GENESIS 10

There are several ways of interpreting Genesis 10:

- It is mere allegory and has no real substance or literal meaning.
- The chapter has geographic meaning and is not an ethnological account of ancient nations and modern identities.
- The Chapter refers to historical nations.
- It lists peoples (e.g., the Dodani or Kittim) and not mere place-names or names of individuals alone. It is primarily concerned with father-son descendants (tribal delineations) and has prophetic undertones. (That is the avenue taken in this article.)

Perhaps the majority of authors and researchers interpret Genesis as geographic representation of regions rather than literal peoples, including, to some degree, the famous Dr. Sayce. According to Archer’s *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, he was:

“... overhasty in surrendering the genetic reliability of Genesis 10 and interpreting it as merely a description of geographical relationships at a time when Canaan was under Egyptian domination ... Even G. E. Wright ... concedes that **this list is arranged on the whole from a racial point of**

Continued next page

view” (Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 212) [emphasis mine].

The fact is, either God’s Word is true and can be trusted, or it is without credibility. It is also of interest that God chose to scatter the nations at Babel for a number of reasons. And it should also be of interest that God used language as a means to scatter the nations. As any anthropologist or linguist will tell you, language is one of the primary modes of maintaining cultural transmission and ethnic identity.

As such, language is one of the ways of tracing the migrations and origins of peoples. And where did so many languages originate this side of the Flood? At the tower at Babel. God shattered the common cause of man, to ensure that man’s evil did not reach its climax prior to His time-frame. He frustrated their communication to undermine their common bond and thus divided or scattered them to ensure that they migrate to their destined and appointed portions of this wonderful earth (Acts 17:26) (Ross, *ibid.* See Psalm 55:9).

“From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them [when and which nation should have the pre-eminence] and the exact places where they should live [their specific location so that they might maintain their identity]” (Acts 17:26, NIV).

IDENTITY OF NATIONS LOST — UNTIL TODAY!

God led the human families to settle where He knows it is best for them. God would have taken into account the climate, weather, vegetation, and the proximity to like nations. He settled them in locations best suited to their potential, their characteristics, strengths and weaknesses and the Great God of the universe left traces and clues to their wanderings for us to discover today.

One major clue they left behind were their names, or traces of their names, which were given to various tribes within the nation or given to place names. It should be remembered, though, that sometimes several nations in history have similar names. For example, several nations were known as “Hittites.” (Donald Wiseman, *Peoples of Old*

Testament Times, p. 197) Or the conflation by historians of Aramaeans with Amorites. This may cause confusion and has tended to “fox” certain writers on the topic.

Another point to remember is that the names of each of the forefathers of these nations reflect their characters and that of their progenitors. It is said that about half of what we are mentally (character, nature and personality) is inherited; and the other half is due to our environment. See James Nichols’, *Heredity and Environment* (entire book).

We are told in Scripture that: “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches” (Proverbs 22:1, ESV) and “A good name is better than precious ointment” (Ecclesiastes 7:1, ESV). Thus, in the Bible, a name is something to be taken seriously, and not to be a word meant for phonetic beauty alone — it was given as a sacred act (witness the naming of Israel and others in Genesis, Christ himself etc). It was not so long ago (a mere few decades) that it was believed that a name placed upon a newborn babe would result in it fulfilling the characteristics of the name. This is exactly what we find in Genesis 10.

One excellent article on this topic is by Susan Bean, “Ethnology and the Study of Proper Names,” *Anthropological Linguistics*, Vol. 22, No. 7, October (1980), pp. 305-16 which contains the following pertinent observations:

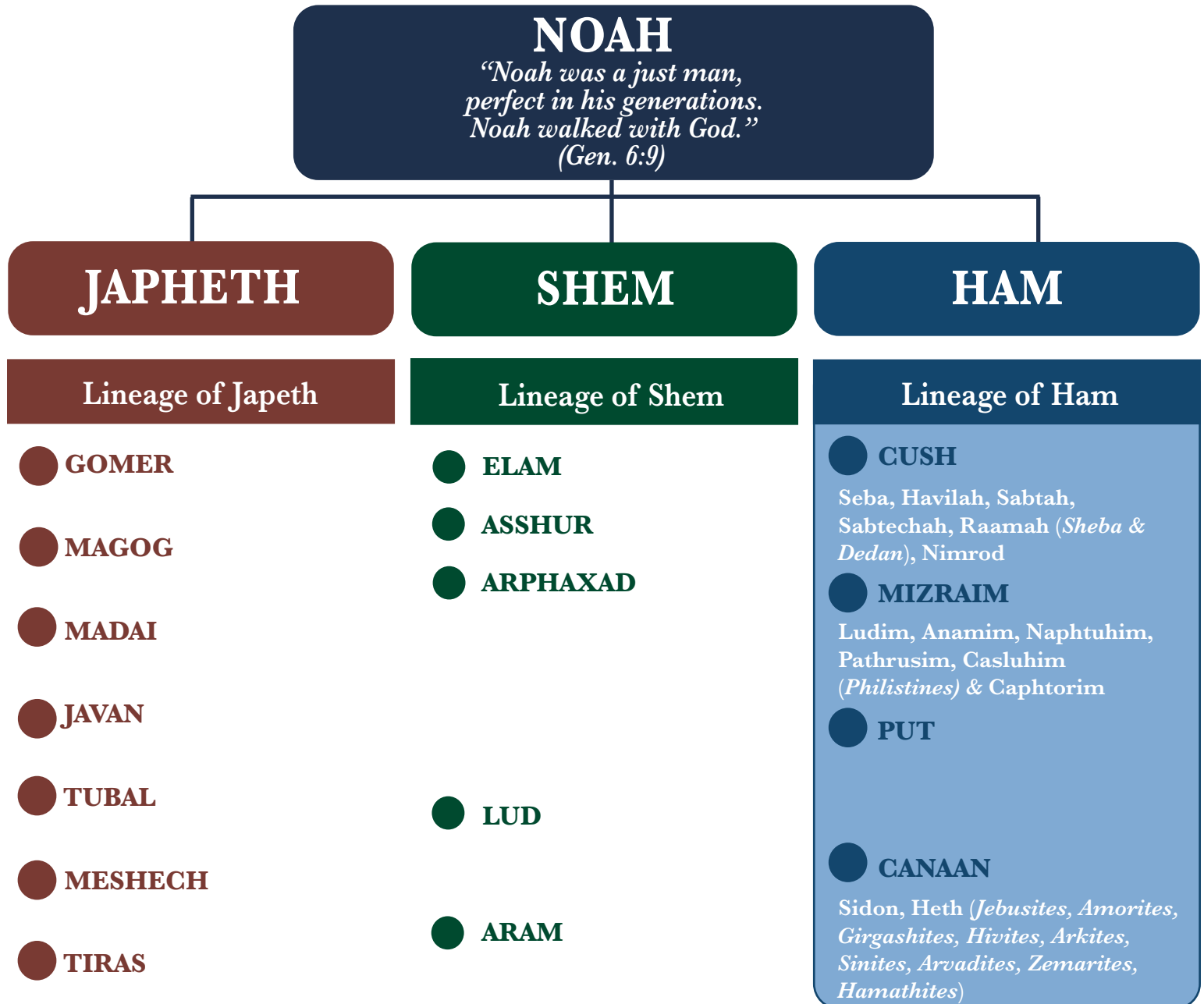
“... a proper name works, i.e. denotes an entity, because it has been rightfully bestowed and consequently ‘belongs to’ its bearer ... For example, the Delaware Indians consider ‘a person and his name (are) one’ (Weslager 1971) ... In many societies the personal name is considered to be part of, or identical with, the soul, self, or personality of its bearer ... For the Basotho, a Bantu speaking people, the descriptive meaning of a name influences the character of its bearer ‘a man usually behaves in accordance with his name’ (Mohome 1972:171) ... People in Surinam who behave badly may be said to have ‘ruined their names’.”

Just as many old societies knew this to be the case, these Scriptures are pointing out that a name has meaning. A name describes one’s reputation, one’s entire character. I will be discussing certain of the names of Noah’s descendants in sequels to

GENESIS 10

THE TABLE OF NATIONS

This is the account of the nations — the descendants of Noah's three sons, Japheth, Shem, and Ham — as they were dispersed over the earth.



"These were the families of the sons of Noah,
 according to their generations, in their nations; and from
 these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood."
 Genesis 10:32

this article.

For example, the descendants of Simeon and Levi, sons of Israel, are described as sometimes being a violent, cruel people, taking after their forefathers (Genesis 49:5-7; 34:24-31). But having certain characteristics which may be described as “negative”, is no excuse for anyone or any nation to behave unseemly. We should try and suppress the negative, inherited traits within us, and instead reinforce those which are positive. We must overcome ourselves. All humans are born with ingrained traits, but unlike animals, our traits do not have to overwhelm us; once we become aware of them, we can choose to go with them or to go in a different direction. Our instincts were made extremely weak in humans so as to allow us to be free moral agents. Behavioural scientists and social engineers have seized on this to try and mould men into the image that they wish us to be.

As we have seen, in the Bible a nation is named after its ancestor. And so it was most often in the classical world. As they migrated, the nations were given new and different names by observers — friend and foe alike — so that they even changed their own names eventually. But many kept their original names until recent centuries. Dorothy Astoria in *The Name Book* maintains the ancient tradition and understanding that:

“Your name is a very important aspect of your personality, and this book has been compiled so that you may recognize the character-building value in understanding its meaning ...

“Our Western culture does not give the same importance to the meaning of names as has been given in the past ... Each name carries its own message ... the heritage, significance and spiritual application inherent in a name” (p. 5).

As the language of nations changed, gradually, over the decades and centuries, so did their names. However, as we shall be discovering, it is quite possible to trace their names back through history to the original. For further information on the Biblical perspective of names refer to Arthur Custance’s book *The Flood: Local or Global?* chapter 1, “Names as Different Societies Have Viewed Them” and chapter 2, “Names as Scripture Views Them”.

Time, language change, corrupted traditions, lies by their enemies — all this has helped conceal the identity of the nations. Even many of the books on this subject published prior to circa 1930 which were not overly influenced by atheistic evolutionary theories are not all that helpful. Evolution is a theory which has openly attempted to deride the Biblical, historical and traditional accounts of national origins.

Why then, is this Table so important? Allow me to list several reasons:

- Chapter 10 of Genesis reveals God’s will and His plan for the nations.
- It gives the correct classification of nations.
- The Table proves the Bible to be inspired.
- Finally, it reveals the future of the nations when linked with relevant prophecies. When we know the true identity of nations then we can understand prophecy. The Bible reveals history and wars to be titanic struggles between races out of greed or the will to survive, and not just between conflicting ideologies.

It is not studied much nowadays, but was certainly popular from the 17th until the early 20th centuries. Scholars such as George Stanley Faber (see Burton Feldman & Robert Richardson, *The Rise of Modern Mythology*. 1680-1860, pp. 396-99 [chapter on George Stanley Faber]) Samuel Bochart, Alexander Hislop, Jacob Bryant and others thought deeply on this subject and developed some fascinating material. But with the rise of Darwinism, “mythography” died and modern ideas on man’s origin arose, clouding and deceiving the true origin of man and his various races, sub-races, nations, ethnic groups, tribes and clans.

Others who have shown an interest in this great truth are Arthur Custance, Archibald Sayce, Bill Cooper, George Rawlinson, Herman Hoeh, John Pilkey, Robert Gayre of Gayre whose works you can seek out at your leisure. They provide some formative information that can be used in basic research into this topic.

NOAH’S THREE SONS AND NATIONAL PROPHECY

Let us dig deep into His precious Word and discover yet more of His truth.

In the book of Proverbs, we are told:

“... yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.” (Proverbs 2:3-5, ESV)

“It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.” (Proverbs 25:2, ESV)

These Biblical principles are of great value for a Christian to hold on to. The Word of God has hundreds of references to the positive attributes of knowledge. However, those who wish to water-down the truth, will almost invariably turn to 1 Corinthians 8:2, which states that knowledge puffs up. However, they do not look at the context, for it is referring to worldly knowledge, not God’s Word or positive knowledge. They also seem to always turn to 2 Corinthians 11:3, which encourages us to have the “simplicity that is in Christ.” By so doing, they try and intimate that we must not study the depths of God’s Word as it is too complicated. Can you believe it? The original Greek in 2 Corinthians 11:3 should actually be translated as “guilelessness,” not “simplicity.” God does not wish us to be simple (“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?” Proverbs 1:22, ESV)

Then, of course, they turn to Ecclesiastes 12:12 which says, “My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” (ESV) They do not see that it does not say that you shouldn’t write books; and it does not say you shouldn’t study. It means that too much study causes weariness — something that few would have a problem with, except students. But let us understand Scriptures in their Biblical context, such as: 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:13; Proverbs 15:28; 25:2; Acts 17:11.

WHY PROPHECY? A SECOND-RATE SUBJECT?

Why is it that the constant excuse from some quarters is that all we need at this time is for sermons on Christian living alone? As if prophecy, typology and other vast areas of His Word have

nothing to do with Christian living. Of course, detailed, accurate prophecy is closely related to Christian living for the following reasons:

- It keeps the bride excitedly anticipating the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13).
- Prophecy leads one to repentance and a close relationship with Him (this is the theme of the prophets and the greatest prophet of all, Jesus Christ).
- If we understand prophecy, we will be in a position to escape the terrors which will descend upon the earth. We are charged to watch (this includes watching world events, the wish-washy condition of the Church, and our spiritual states i.e., Luke 21:36; Matthew 24:42; 25:13).
- As we are living in the Latter Days, it behooves us to know the signs of the times and how world events line up with prophecy to enable us to warn a sick and dying world (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:1-7; Jeremiah 6:17, 27).
- “Where there is no vision the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). The *Revised Standard Version* translates “vision” as “prophecy.” The Hebrew word *hazon* is translated similarly elsewhere (see 2 Chronicles 32:32; Daniel 8:1; Obadiah 1). Should we neglect these futuristic warning words of God, we will perish (see 1 Samuel 3:1; Lamentations 2:9).
- It is a major proof of the Bible.
- Prophecy, by its very nature, encourages us to want to dig deeper and deeper into God’s Word, to uncover its other precious nuggets.

The Apostle Peter wrote: “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19 ESV. See 2 Corinthians 4:6.)

I see nothing in Peter’s statements which legitimizes the watering-down of His truths or prophecy. With that said, let us explore an aspect of God’s Word which many have watered-down tremendously.

In the next installment of **Origins of Nations**, we will continue to examine this exciting topic, concentrating on some of the descendants of Ham. □

BRIEF

SCRAP THAT

Germany and France have finally decided to abandon the development of an advanced fighter jet for the EU. Announced nearly ten years ago, the project was plagued by disagreement. As with many EU collective defense schemes, the priorities for each partner were too far apart. They could not even agree on what sort of capabilities the craft needed to have. Wrangling between Airbus and Dassault, who are more used to being rivals than working together, was also an issue. The jet itself has been canceled but the project's auxiliary components will be kept alive under the same name to help avoid the embarrassment of having to abandon the whole thing.

NORTHERN SNAKEHEAD

This truly hideous fish is remarkable, in a frightening sort of way. Like the lungfish, it can survive for days outside of the water, propelling itself on its fins. It earns the name "snakehead" in that its head coloration is something you would expect to see on a reptile. It hails from Asia and is considered highly invasive. It can devastate indigenous fish populations, and even eat rodents and small birds when it goes for a romp on shore. Alarmingly, one was discovered on Long Island. Such is the concern that wildlife authorities have been organizing searches to try to stop the snakehead from becoming established. They have been using electricity to shock bodies of water, stunning all the fish and allowing them to float to the surface to try and find and remove the snakehead, which is thought to have been released from a market or personal aquarium into the wild. Let's hope they only had one.

FEMALE-ONLY

Not so, says Australia. A major legal case this summer forced the owner of a female-only app to pay damages for blocking a transgender user. An appeals court called it "direct discrimination," awarding \$20,000 (AUD) in damages and up to \$100,000 for legal fees. While many nations have been forced to recognize that sex at birth is immutable, Australia ruled in 2024 that it is changeable. This in addition to holding that gender is an expression of how we feel about ourselves as opposed to a concrete classification of who and what we are.

CARBONOLOGY

This Chinese company was founded with help from a former VP at Tesla. They claim to be able to convert carbon dioxide into usable fuels normally derived from oil. The process has been proven and is now being tested at scale. The process is called Direct Air Capture. It takes lots of electricity, but leverages intermittent sources such as wind and solar to produce fuels that can be used on demand. The company is initially targeting commercial jet fuel, rather than something more plentiful like gas or diesel, to determine if its process is commercially viable. Success could very well shake the industry and it showcases the potential emerging technologies have to rattle existing markets.

CUETA

The territory is a part of Spain despite being located on the northern coast of Africa, directly south of Gibraltar. It has proven a magnet in the midst of the ongoing irregular migration problem.

Fueled by rumors on social media, over 70,000 people stormed into the enclave in a single day. They (mistakenly) thought that by reaching it they would be granted asylum or have access to Europe, despite Cueta not being included in the Schengen free-movement agreement that transcends national borders. The vast majority were sent back over the border to Morocco.

Still, the incident was cause for concern across Europe. Italy suspended free movement with Spain, not only over this incident but because Spain's socialist government has enacted many open-door policies that encourage these types of movements. This shows the cracks that are forming and widening inside of the EU as we know it and point towards future fragmentation. Morocco has stationed the military along the border and a second attempted border rush was preempted, leading to many arrests. This issue remains a prophetic catalyst for the future of Europe.

FLOCK, RING, AND THE DEATH OF PRIVACY

No longer does the world of total surveillance and control outlined by the Bible seem far fetched. Flock cameras have caused a stir in communities across the country, logging the license plates of every passerby. The arrests they have led to have been touted as justification but the end result is still total oversight. Amazon's Ring Doorbell is also facing a class action lawsuit over its "Familiar Faces" feature. It uses facial recognition to capture and store images of individuals, allowing you to be notified not just when someone is near your device, but who is near it. The allegation is that this is carried out without the consent of the person being monitored. Adoption of technologies of this nature all point to one thing: universal surveillance and monitoring.

ALLIANCE

Saudi Arabia has recently signed a mutual defense pact with both Pakistan and Turkey. Interestingly, it triggered absolutely no response amid ongoing attacks from the Houthis in Yemen. Perhaps there is some red line that has yet to be crossed as the specific stipulations of the agreement have not been published. However, it is reasonable to consider that the pact is aimed at an entirely different "enemy." Negotiations have concluded

under the shadow of the war with Iran, but they began while the world was focused on the conflict between Israel and Gaza. Israel has been the target of concerted attacks by all of these nations in the past, something that the Bible indicates will recur during the end time. Egypt is interested in joining, considering itself a natural addition.

CRIME?

The FBI has published statistics showing the biggest year-over-year drop in violent crime on record. Murder and robbery each dropped over 18%, with the decrease across all categories reaching nearly 10%. The media has floated any number of wild theories as to why this may be the case, like behaviors and changing societal norms... Sure. Anything but a concerted push to deport violent criminals who are in the country illegally — it couldn't possibly be that.

Across the pond, UK officials have faced public ire over the distribution of pamphlets informing migrants that rape and violence against women is wrong. It also pointedly mentions that it could negatively affect the perpetrator's asylum claim. Ah, priorities. A journalist was also reprimanded for posing as a migrant and crossing the channel from France, showcasing how authorities on both sides facilitate the process.

AFD GAINING

The much maligned Alternative for Germany has been resonating with German voters despite the continual criticisms, official "extremist" designation, and the refusal of most other political parties to even consider a coalition that includes them. They secured nearly 44% of the vote in the German state of Saxony-Anhalt recently, just shy of an outright majority but far ahead of the competition. Only one minor party is open to potentially governing alongside them, or potentially individual members of other parties could break ranks to join a coalition. Otherwise, there will be another round of voting in which the AfD could win outright. The results were shocking to the mainstream parties. It shows the limits of verbal vilification, as well as how sick and tired the German people are of political pabulum sans results. The establishment would do well to take note. 

RETURN TO BABYLON

by Michael Armstrong

The world is under incredible strain. Great power conflict in war and trade, demographic concerns, migration, social issues, natural disasters, grappling with the reality and potential of AI as well as economic problems galore, just to list a few. These tensions ripple through society, often threatening to boil over into something truly heinous. Where does it all lead? Towards what do we seem to be incessantly rushing?

We would do well to pause and consider from time to time. As personal trials often lead us back to our faith and remind us of our reliance on God, so our collective struggles cause us to ask where God is in all of this turmoil. What part can so much strife and conflict have in His plan?

We turn to His Holy Scriptures when we need consolation and comfort, to be reminded of His enduring mercy or to be reinvigorated for the good work He has given us to do in this life. But is that all the Bible has to offer? We tend to forget that the Good Book also has a great deal to say about the past and the future; that it is an unrivaled repository of history and prophecy.

These scriptures are the ones that can help us make sense of what we see unfolding around

us. As the gospels and the law can bring reform, reconciliation, peace and truth to our personal lives, so others can grant knowledge and understanding as we grapple with the big picture.

Most important to remember is that while Christ came preaching the good news about the soon coming Kingdom of God, He also imparted some very bad news about the events that would immediately precede it.

His disciples, marveling at the Temple, were shocked when He foretold its destruction. They pressed Him further for information. When was this going to happen? What signs would there be? How could they tell when the ultimate judgment would take place and the Kingdom of God be established? His answer included a great deal of calamity (Matthew 24, Luke 21).

“Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven” (Luke 21:10-11). This is what Matthew 24:8 calls the beginning of sorrows.

“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword,



and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:24-26).

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22).

Shocking, isn't it? A time of calamity without equal in the pages of history. The worst ever. So bad that if God didn't intervene, no human being would survive.

We are further informed that in the final days, the world will be dominated by an evil figure. He will be worshiped, "...and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Revelation 13:7). The empire he assembles will go on to control all commerce (Revelation 13:16-17).

Revelation 17 describes it as being empowered by a city that rules over kings (v18). This corrupt religious system is called, among many other unflattering things, Babylon (v5). That description recurs in the following chapter (verses 3 and 10) as its corruption and impending destruction are foretold. The comparison is meaningful and illuminating.

We first read of "Babel" being established by Nimrod in Genesis chapters 10 and 11. His name is often attributed to his encroachment on the territory allotted to Shem's descendants in Genesis 10:11. It means "to have excess or a superabundance," essentially a rebellion against God's distribution of land. His self-aggrandizement, even if based on prowess or natural ability, is interesting in light of our topic.

What Nimrod began to do brought about God's direct intervention and one of the most pivotal moments in the history of mankind. God was not going to allow all of humanity to be dominated by one man at that point in time. The separation of the languages effectively ensured that. Language became a barrier indeed, but sometimes barriers exist for our protection.

Continued next page

From our perspective in the 21st century, perhaps we can appreciate the wisdom of God's intervention. Complete unification might bring benefits through cooperation, but when things go wrong no one is insulated from the effects. The same could be said of corruption. If there is a single target, where do the nefarious flock? And the potential damage wrought by a single despot working their way to the top is enormous, as the world will sadly discover.

Already, the vulnerabilities to the "global economy" are blindingly obvious. The disruption of traffic through Hormuz has been a notable one. Major intervention by the US to prop up the Japanese Yen (and thus avoid the fallout to the Dollar) is another illustration of how interconnected things are. Sanctions also expose this: Those against Russia have been significant, but they are nothing compared to the threat of expanded Iranian sanctions that hang over major banks and corporations in places like Turkey, India, and China. The truth is that any serious market shock or calamity ripples across the globe in this day and age.

Also, we can possibly appreciate a bit of what God meant when He said "...this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Genesis 11:6). Whether or not the tower they were building, "whose top may reach unto heaven," was the stuff of science fiction or just a massive cooperative undertaking is debatable, but ultimately secondary. It is worth noting that the same phrase is used to describe cities in Canaan (Deuteronomy 1:28). What is remarkable is the scientific advancement that has taken place over recent decades as research has essentially transcended the language barrier.

None of the most revolutionary concepts are being pursued in isolation. Whether cooperatively or in competition, leaders in technologies like AI and nuclear fusion spur each other to greater efforts. What cannot be lost on us is that these these novel products, in addition to worldwide integration (and struggle for dominance), already open the door for the kind of nightmare scenario we read about in Bible prophecy.

It may be humorous to watch the bloopers from a Chinese robotics conference, but behind

all of the falls and blunders is steady, frightening advancement. We might compare it to the baby steps of AI, fondly remembering all of the extra digits its early images contained. However, when it can replace your job it becomes another matter entirely. Historically, the industrial revolution left untold numbers destitute, despite paving the way for what we now consider normal. It can absolutely happen again, all while enabling the type of total surveillance, monitoring and control that is indicated in prophecy.

Mark Zuckerberg recently faced a rebellion among his employees over leaked plans to lay off up to 60% of their workforce and fill their roles with AI. Those plans were canceled, but how long will that tactic remain viable? Bill Gates has been traveling to meet with world leaders to share his concerns over the looming disruptions he expects to the global economy. He hopes governments will act to retain 40% of jobs for humans. And he means all jobs.

Elon also did a controversial interview with *The Economist*. He posits that combinations of new technologies will lead to a massive increase in productivity and output and thus result in deflation as supply outpaces demand. Still, his musings are apocalyptic in the sense that most people will be reduced to dependency on the powers that be. Albeit many would go willingly.

Much of the restraint to man's imaginations has long since fallen away in things we take utterly for granted. Flight, electricity, the internal combustion engine; we have grown accustomed to the status quo despite how remarkable it would appear to someone from a different time. The changes and disruptions that are looming could take it to an altogether different level.

The geopolitical repercussions of any nation or bloc winning one of these pivotal technological races will be enormous as well. It could create a moment similar to the United States post WW2 — which for a brief period was the only nation in possession of a nuclear weapon. And while the world is undeniably interconnected, it is not dominated by any particular power yet.

This returns us to the idea of Babylon. Historically, it grew into the first of the world-ruling

empires mentioned in the book of Daniel, chapter 2. Importantly, the vision of King Nebuchadnezzar demonstrates unity, or the transference of dominion. It passes from Babylon at the day it was given through Persia, Greece and Rome down to the time of the end. This illustration shows that the final empire is a continuation of all those that have come before in certain aspects, but particularly a resurgence of Rome's dominion at the time of Christ's return.

Also relevant is the fact that ancient Babylon was used as an instrument of God's punishment against Judah's rebellion. In the end time, a type of Babylon will dominate a world that has also forgotten God. But as Babylon was superseded historically, so it will be prophetically. Isaiah 13 puts this in no uncertain terms and in clear end time language.

The current struggles may be burdensome and terrifying at times, but they are evidence that God is true. He has not ceased to warn those who will listen, imploring them to mend their ways and accept His mercy. He has preserved for us the past, and written for us what will be in the future. A vicious empire is going to emerge on the world scene.

We would do well to take hold of all that God has given and keep it as a comfort against

the calamity to come. Peter wrote "...be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:2-4).

The world is not looking to God for solutions or the truth about where our current endeavors are heading. Instead it revels in its own destructive accomplishments. Peter goes on to remind us of God's mercy, that the window for repentance is open for the time being, and that endurance will be required on the part of those who already believe. He reminds us of what God expects while time remains: peace, righteousness, and growth in grace and knowledge.

The return to Babylon is imminent. God is not going to wait forever, but He is working out His plan according to His own schedule. And no matter what comes, the larger issues can be settled and our lives secure with Jesus Christ. Until that day, we can continue in faith and confidence, praying earnestly, "Thy kingdom come." □



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BIBLE STUDY

by Dr. James Ricks & Natalie Ricks, M.A.

When God Calls

THE CONVERSION AND CALLING OF THE FIRSTFRUITS

It seems that God is hiding the knowledge of the truth from the majority of mankind. When and why will God alter this pattern? We know that Christ witnessed to the people in parables because most were not truly sincere in seeking God with their whole heart.

Isaiah 29:13-15, "Therefore the Lord said: 'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, 14 therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden. 15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, And their works are in the dark; They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?"'"

The insincerity of the people was clear to

God; the people were led by suspect teachers and were not ready to accept the truth.

Isaiah the prophet then revealed that this period of deceived people will come to an end. Full true justice is obviously not in our present world. True justice will come in the future. It will come in several stages. The first stage is those in the new covenant era who are called by God; whose minds are beginning to question the false religions of this age.

Isaiah 32:1-4, "Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, And princes will rule with justice.

"A man will be as a hiding place from the wind, And a cover from the tempest,

As rivers of water in a dry place, As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

"The eyes of those who see will not be dim, And the ears of those who hear will listen.

"Also the heart of the brash will understand knowledge, And the tongue of the stammerers will be ready to speak plainly."

Verse 15, "Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high..."

People in the present world are deceived until they are called by God. A small percentage are called now; they are the "elect," or "very elect."

BIBLE STUDY

Romans 11:7-8, “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 Just as it is written: ‘God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.’”

If a person is open to new truth and begins questioning mankind’s religious traditions, God may be opening his or her mind. That person could be among those chosen as the “firstfruits,” or the “elect,” if they respond to His calling.

2 Corinthians 3:15-16, “15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”

The Apostle Paul is writing to believers that the veil that covers the hearts of most people is lifted for them when they turn to the true Christ. When one finally makes the decision to repent and turn to God, His truth will flood into them. Veils will be lifted, but for them only — not the rest of the world. This new convert will become part of the firstfruits to God.

Verse 18, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The spiritually discerned truth will be received in the hearts of the elect or chosen. If you are not sure of your calling, pray about it! Ask God to open your mind ever more to deep biblical truths.

THE FIRST AND SECOND RESURRECTIONS REVEAL THE FUTURE

These two resurrections reveal the true fate of mankind. The second coming of the Messiah is the timing of the “first resurrection” of those being called now. When Jesus returns to this earth in power and glory, those converted prior to His return will be raised to glory. Paul comforted the believers with this good news:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

All those who have answered God’s call up until that point in history will rise at His return! However, most of the world will still be deceived.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

God will put His law into the hearts of true believers as part of the salvation process. Read Hebrews 8:9-10. What happens to the billions of people throughout history who are not yet saved?

Revelation 20:4-5, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.”

It says plainly that the rest of the dead — billions of people including many who have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ — would live again. This is the second resurrection. The two resurrections are separated by a thousand years.

John 5:28-29, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice 29 and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.” (RSV)

The first resurrection is called the “resurrection to life” — an everlasting life! The second resurrection is a resurrection to judgment.

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BIBLE STUDY

But what is meant by judgment? People cannot be evaluated, or judged, if they are ignorant of the truth. Those raised in the second resurrection will have the opportunity to live a full life with the knowledge of the truth of God. You could think of it like a boxing match with a long fifteen round struggle. The referee will judge the winner on the entire contest. They get points for each round. The conclusion is important also. Even infants who died without ever having a chance to live their life will be resurrected with an entire lifetime to understand God's truth and be saved by Jesus Christ. See Isaiah 65:20.

THE WORLD WILL BE DELUGED WITH TRUTH

Jesus mentioned that some of the most pagan and perverted societies will get a chance at salvation in the next life and will even start ahead of some of the self-righteous Israelites in their judgment.

Matthew 11:21-23, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done

in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

At the the second resurrection, all the world will know the truth. Satan the deceiver will be put away so that mankind will have a period of time in which to be judged.

Isaiah 11:9, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

Habakkuk 2:14, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

Finally, the Book of Life will be opened so God can add billions of new names. The vast majority of mankind will be saved during this period. God will be victorious over Satan. A fair and merciful God will give to all those who died under varying levels of deception an opportunity for salvation, with their hearts and minds finally open to understanding His truth. They will then be judged on how they use that knowledge and most will be saved.

Revelation 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened [the Bible]. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

Answer the call and strive for the best resurrection, the first resurrection, to rule with Christ, bringing justice and truth to all mankind! ☐

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THE PARENTING DIVIDE

NO ONE TALKS ABOUT

*How politics shapes how we think
and talk about parenting*

by Bethany Mandel

Spend enough time online and you'll notice a political pattern that has very little to do with tax policy or elections. Conservatives and progressives increasingly speak entirely different emotional languages.

Conservatives tend to tell stories rooted in gratitude. Progressives tend to tell stories rooted in grievance. You see it everywhere. One side instinctively counts blessings, while the other catalogs complaints. One side looks first for reasons to be thankful, while the other looks first for reasons to be aggrieved. Obviously there are exceptions, but as a broad cultural tendency it's difficult to miss.

The divide becomes even more striking once you enter the world of parenting.

Scroll through social media long enough, and you'll notice that conservative mothers and fathers generally describe their children as blessings. Their feeds aren't sanitized fairy tales—there are tantrums, sleepless nights, endless laundry, sibling fights, and toddlers determined to redecorate the house with a Sharpie. But those frustrations exist within a much larger story about the privilege of raising children. The difficult moments are acknowledged without becoming the defining feature of parenthood.

Progressive parenting content often feels like the inverse. Parenting is framed as an endless exercise in drudgery. Every inconvenience becomes evidence of the crushing “mental load.” Every ordinary sacrifice becomes proof that motherhood is fundamentally exhausting, monotonous, and underappreciated.

Those are profoundly different ways of looking at exactly the same reality.

Anyone who has raised children knows both

stories contain elements of truth. I've had colicky babies who only slept while being held as I sat up in a rocking chair in their bedroom for months on end. I've folded enough laundry to clothe a small nation, cleaned up stomach bugs at two in the morning, and repeated the phrase “please stop hitting your brother” more times than I could ever count. None of that is to romanticize parenting. The difficult moments are real, and every parent experiences them. The difference is whether those moments become the defining story you tell about your family, or simply one chapter in a much larger and happier one.

I often think about one of Jordan Peterson's simplest pieces of parenting advice: raise children you and others actually enjoy being around. It sounds almost offensively obvious, yet it captures something we've forgotten. Children are not static creatures who simply happen to us. They are shaped, profoundly and continually, by the adults raising them. The more time you spend with your children, the more they begin to resemble you. They absorb your habits, your sense of humor, your emotional responses, your values, and your view of the world. Which is why it is always so striking when parents publicly describe their children with open contempt. More often than not, they're telling us far more about themselves than about their kids.

That dynamic was on full display recently during an episode of the podcast *I've Had It*, hosted by Jennifer Welch and Angie “Pumps” Sullivan (pulled by my friend Curtis Houck from News-Busters). Discussing homeschooling, Sullivan declared, “I don't trust somebody that wants to be with their kids 24/7. I think a lot of dumb people do it because it's just easier.”

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What fascinated me wasn't even her opinion about homeschooling, which was absolutely ludicrous on its face. It was the assumption underneath it. She simply could not imagine wanting to spend that much time with your own children unless there were some selfish or pathological explanation. To her, the very desire to be around your kids required an ulterior motive.

It's tempting to write it off as an extreme voice out for attention, but as a homeschool mother, it's a sentiment I hear shockingly frequently. I'll tell people that I homeschool and they reply, "Oh, I could never spend all day with my children." I never know quite how to respond, because that's weird and that's shameful and it should be common sense to say so.

It apparently never occurred to her that some parents genuinely enjoy their children's company, or that spending more time together might itself be part of what produces close families and delightful children in the first place. Imagine hearing your own mother say something like that publicly. Imagine realizing that she regards time spent with you not as one of life's greatest joys, but as something only a fool would voluntarily choose. As painful as that would be for any child to hear, it also reveals something much larger about the way many progressives have come to think about parenthood.

This strikes me as one of the least discussed ways our culture is bifurcating. We spend enormous amounts of time talking about political polarization, but almost no time talking about the radically different emotional narratives Americans are telling about family life itself. One worldview treats children as the central joy around which adult life is organized. The other increasingly treats them as a series of obligations competing with personal fulfillment. Neither side denies that parenting is difficult. They simply disagree about what deserves the headline.

Part of the problem is that social media creates a profoundly distorted picture of modern parenthood. Influencing is a business, and outrage, resentment, and commiseration drive engagement far more reliably than gratitude ever will. Layer on top of that the reality that many conservative mothers have learned to avoid saying much of anything political online for fear of coordinated harassment or threats

to their livelihoods, and you end up with a parenting conversation that is overwhelmingly shaped by progressive voices. The result is that many young adults scrolling Instagram or TikTok encounter an endless stream of mothers telling them how miserable parenthood is, while many of the parents who are quietly enjoying family life simply aren't participating in the conversation.

I keep coming back to something I wrote five years ago in *Deseret* about what I called the public relations campaign against motherhood. The campaign has only accelerated. We have become so accustomed to hearing mothers publicly describe parenting as exhausting, limiting, and joyless that genuine gratitude is now viewed with suspicion. Spend enough time online and you'll find people accusing mothers who genuinely enjoy their children of promoting "toxic positivity," as though speaking warmly about your own family is somehow dishonest.

But gratitude isn't toxic. It's truthful.

It doesn't require pretending that parenting is easy or that every stage is delightful. It simply refuses to let the hardest moments become the defining ones. Every parent has days they would rather forget. Every parent occasionally loses patience, longs for a quiet afternoon, or wonders if the laundry basket somehow reproduces overnight. But those moments aren't the story. They're interruptions in a story that, for most of us, is defined by laughter around the dinner table, bedtime conversations that go on far longer than they should, family vacations, inside jokes, and the quiet privilege of watching children slowly become adults.

Culture is, in many ways, simply the accumulation of the stories we tell one another. If the loudest voices in our culture insist that children are primarily burdens, inconveniences, and obstacles to self-actualization, we shouldn't be surprised when young adults begin delaying parenthood—or deciding against it altogether. Children hear those messages. Teenagers hear those messages. Young couples hear those messages. If we want a society that welcomes children, values families, and encourages the next generation to become parents themselves, then perhaps the most important place to begin is by speaking about our own children with the affection, delight, and gratitude they deserve. □

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR: THE CHRISTIAN

A true Christian is one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. His attitude of mind and behavior are consistent with the teachings and life of Jesus Christ; he follows God's way of life as expressed through His laws and respects his fellowman by being concerned with "giving" rather than "getting." A Christian strives for success in all areas of his active, abundant life.

DOCTRINAL OVERVIEW

The early disciples of Jesus Christ strove to imitate His actions, teachings, and way of life. It was for this reason they were labeled as "Christians" (i.e. followers of Christ) by nonbelievers to whom the disciples' way of life was obvious (Acts 11:26). During the time of the early New Testament apostolic Church, the term "Christian" was certainly in every way accurate — for the disciples were indeed imitators and followers of the person and teachings of Jesus Christ.

But today the word "Christian" is extremely loosely and inaccurately used, the description being frequently applied to any person or group that simply professes a belief in the person of Christ and acknowledges Him as the Savior. The appellation "Christian" is even applied to all people, irrespective of their religious convictions, who are simply born and reared in a "Christian" culture. These usages are far from adequate when we consider the original meaning of the term "Christian," which is "one who actually follows the life and teachings of Christ in detail." Even a cursory examination of our ostensibly Christian culture in general and the many purportedly Christian groups in particular brings out little dependence on the teachings of Jesus

Christ and even less resemblance to His actual life.

To be a Christian, a person must have God's Holy Spirit dwelling within him. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him (Rom. 8:9). Before one can be baptized and receive this Spirit, he must repent of his sins, profess faith in Christ and then accept Him as his personal Savior. This deep identification with Christ must precede the receipt of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to having the Holy Spirit, one must live and act by the teachings and values of Christ if he is to be considered a Christian. He must live "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). "He who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked" (1 John 2:6). The greatest expression of that obedience is wholehearted love toward God and toward neighbor. In this regard, Christ said His disciples would be known because of their love, especially for one another (John 13:35; 15:10-17). Ultimately, of course, it is through the Holy Spirit that one can obey God and express love. In turn, God will give His Spirit only to those who are willing to obey Him (Acts 5:31). Therefore, the basic qualities of Christianity go hand in hand with being a true Christian and cannot be separated.

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Christianity is a way of life. It is more than just believing. It is the attitude of mind which leads an individual to follow God's directives for social conduct and for personal behavior. Indeed, before the name "Christian" took over as common terminology, it was their way of life that set Christians apart as different (Acts 9:1-2; 19:9; 24:14).

Christianity revolves around clear, demonstrable actions which reveal the intents and beliefs of a person trying to live as Jesus lived. Mere belief in a name or title in and by itself, as James points out, is valueless: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe — and shudder" (James 2:19).

A Christian is one whose whole outlook and frame of mind is in the process of transformation from "carnal" to "spiritual." When one rises from baptismal waters he becomes a "new man" by taking on a whole new spiritual lifestyle, created after the likeness of God in "true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24). Whereas before his conversion he armed himself to face life with his own pride, ego, strength and intellect alone, the true Christian now adds the "whole armor" of God — the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Word of God (Eph. 6:13-17).

These fruits, or characteristics, of the Holy Spirit become progressively more manifest in the life of a Christian. Hate is replaced by love, anxiety by peace, fearfulness by faith, indulgence by temperance, and pride by meekness. All these and the other fruits of the Spirit work together to overshadow the natural, carnal characteristics of adultery, idolatry, strife, envy, wrath and the many other aspects and variations of human nature.

As the Christian begins to express godly qualities, he grows in the appreciation of their superiority over his own human qualities. From this appreciation grows the goal of expressing more and more of the righteousness of Christ living within him (Gal. 2:20) while he roots out, with God's help his own disobedience and self-righteousness. He struggles to move closer to the basic essence of

"pure and undefiled" religion: an outgoing concern for others with no thought of recompense for the self: this godly attitude is exemplified in James' admonition in 1:27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

The Christian will strive to avoid some of the pitfalls of close human associations. Judging one another (Rom. 14:13), making spiritual comparisons (II Cor. 10:12), offending those who are weak, gossiping and spreading rumors (James 3); none have any place in true Christianity. On the contrary, each Christian must do his or her best to "never ... put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother" (Rom. 14:13), to compare ourselves only with "the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), to strengthen those who are weak, and to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2).

Likewise, the Christian will grow in the knowledge of God's Word and begin to express the wisdom which comes from this knowledge as understood through God's Spirit. The Spirit of God united with the "spirit of man" within him opens his mind to comprehend godly things (I Cor. 2:9 ff). It gives him understanding and insight and reorders his values and priorities so that God and His knowledge are now first in his life (cf. Prov. 1:7).

Having God and His plan primary in one's life in no way denigrates the physical cares and requirements of normal living. Quite the contrary, a Christian addresses himself to these things with new understanding of their place in his goal of following God's way in this present physical life as he strives toward gaining eternal life and entering the God family.

The Christian knows that one who will not provide for his house is worse than an unbeliever (I Tim. 5:8). Thus, the physical cares of life are no longer an ephemeral end in themselves, but are a means of developing and expressing love through giving. Christians should certainly be the greatest examples of both spiritual and physical success. For a Christian to accomplish less in his physical life than he is able is not only a waste of his own

abilities but a neglect of his God-given potential.

The true Christian views his secular education, the establishment of a career and subsequent professional development as vital keys for building the successful life exemplifying the characteristics of God. Additionally, the opportunity to become professionally accomplished and prosperous by the world's traditional standards — to gain a good reputation in one's field, a position of responsibility, social recognition and financial rewards — are not only good but desirable, as long as God and His laws always come first. God wants His children to be successful in all aspects of their physical lives. To develop the full range of our God-given human potential as responsible, mature, effective adults is something all Christians must strive for. To do any less neglects these God-given gifts and squanders opportunities for both physical and spiritual growth. Indeed, a successful Christian makes a powerful witness to the practical, efficacious veracity of God's way of life as revealed in the Bible.

A Christian life is thus in no way passive. It is full of challenges, both physical and spiritual. It requires great resolve to obey God, to shun both the overt and the subtle evils and influences of human society.

The true follower of Jesus Christ will strive to prove the superiority of a godly way of life through his own example. A Christian does not debate religion with others; he does not try to twist their arms into believing as he does, nor does he try to "convert" them in an antagonistic manner. He is, however, prepared and happy to answer questions about his beliefs when asked by an interested person. As Peter stated, "...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15). A Christian strives to be a "light" to the world by allowing his actions to speak for themselves. He knows that one who tries to love his neighbor as himself will win that neighbor's love in return and may, according to God's will, encourage that neighbor toward following Christ as he himself does.

Thus, a Christian has many positive qualities. The most basic summary of these qualities is to say they comprise a life of giving as opposed to getting,

of serving others instead of being served, of loving instead of selfishness, and of accomplishing and building instead of tearing down and destroying. It is the way spoken of by Christ in the beatitudes and in the sermon on the Mount. It is the way naturally produced by the motivation of God's Holy Spirit. It is the way Jesus lived and acted; and a Christian is one who follows Christ in this way.

But the requirement for a Christian to adhere closely to the principles of Christ does not mean that all Christians must be totally identical in personality, personal tastes or preferences. Quite the opposite is true. God, as the Creator of mankind, was the One who designed the potential for wide differences in human proclivities and personalities, likes and dislikes and even in our physical and mental makeup. He intended from the beginning that differences in environment and heredity should allow (and even cause) great variety within the human species. And God intends that these differences should be expressed (within reasonable limits).

We are required to lead a life of personal responsibility and character before God and our fellow man — a life that is pleasing and obedient to our Creator and one that enables the individual to find and reach his greatest personal potential and fulfillment.

God's great love for man has given man the basic guidelines for living life which, if followed, will ensure a full, abundant physical life and the growth of godly character in every pursuit and activity. These fundamental instructions, as revealed in the Bible, allow for great individual variation so that all can still maintain their own personal identity, preferences and individuality. The two overriding principles one should consider in applying God's law to the everyday cares and pursuits of life involve the continuing and conscious recognition that: 1) Christianity is a way of life; and that 2) everything we do as Christians should be done as if under the scrutiny of Christ (Col. 3:17). In different areas of life, these principles take on different meanings.

For example, the Bible clearly recognizes the arts as representing some of the highest expressions

of man's potential. Obviously any art form which encourages the breaking of any of God's laws is wrong, but beyond this, the Bible makes little distinction as to "right" or "wrong" in art, music, literature, poetry, architecture, etc., other than to emphasize positive purpose in their expression. The application of God's laws in these areas of artistic expression is more complex today than it was in biblical times. The key principles, applying the fundamental standards of God's Word, are balance and beauty, elegance and harmony, inspiration and skill, sensitivity and creativity. (Cultural differences may necessitate that certain criteria, "beauty" and "quality," for example, be subjectively determined. What is beautiful music to an Asian or an African might seem discordant to a European and vice versa. The unifying principle is to be found in an affirmative answer to the question, "Is it edifying to the individual Christian?" As in other matters, each person must use wisdom and discretion based upon these general guidelines and make his own decisions for himself.)

A godly way of life must include the basic aspects of physical health: good nutrition in a balanced diet, proper amounts of exercise and sleep, living in accord with public health ordinances and principles — food safety, animal and pest control, waste disposal, building standards — and taking care to avoid bodily injury. While eschewing faddism or fanaticism of any kind, the church encourages everyone to eat natural foods as much as possible and to avoid those processed foods and preservatives which can have debilitating physiological effects. In this context, a Christian will avoid the use of tobacco or illegal drugs in any form and drink alcoholic beverages only in moderation. If illness or injury should occur, a Christian has a great advantage over the nonbeliever; he can ask for God's help in healing, in addition to seeking the most competent medical aid available.

In matters of dress and style, the church teaches and emphasizes the biblical principle of modesty. Balance, good taste, quality and modesty are stressed in the use of all clothing and bodily decorations such as hair styles and makeup. How a person looks and what he wears is a personal matter, but an individual should attire himself in

such a way as to be presentable to Christ. We are told in I Corinthians 10:31: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The church encourages its members to look "normal," in keeping with the styles and customs of their times and places. Church members should not look overtly different from other people in their immediate surroundings, though they should always be striving to improve themselves, being representatives of God, in all areas of their lives. In all such matters the members are encouraged to avoid extremes and to use common sense. This sound-minded, temperate approach is what a Christian will develop as he grows in God's Spirit (II Tim. 1:7; Gal. 5:22-23). The use of balance in these areas is essential, though the church does not police its members' personal lives.

In the area of celebration of nonreligious holidays, the Church of God has never taken any stand against the observance of various and sundry days during the course of each calendar year, whether they be national or personal. In all countries around the world, our members keep nonreligious days which are special to their countries or themselves. For example, the majority of American church members celebrate Thanksgiving Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Memorial Day, Columbus Day, Washington's Birthday and the like. Other personal days have long been commonly observed by Church of God members, days such as Mother's Day, Father's Day and wedding anniversaries. These are commonly observed either through the exchanging of gifts (as in Mother's and Father's Days), the celebration over a family meal (as in Thanksgiving), or merely abstaining from work or going on an outing (such as Labor Day, the Fourth of July, etc.).

The Church of God, likewise, has no specific statement of doctrine concerning the common custom of the celebration or the observance of birthdays. The Bible itself keeps careful track of the ages of the patriarchs and of the kings of Israel and Judah (especially at the beginning of their reigns). Levites worked in the service of the tabernacle of the congregation from thirty to fifty years old (Num. 4:23). Our society also requires that we continually list the date of our birth in everything from job

applications to the national census.

To some families, the passage of the birthday of a child at age six is quite an important occasion with congratulatory hugs and kisses and the sending of a proud little boy to his first day in grade school. Perhaps, in other families, the event is comparatively unimportant, and there is no special note taken of the passage of any particular year. In all of our memories, it is safe to say that some birthday observances have retained special meaning: perhaps it was a particular plateau of life at which a certain achievement or accomplishment may have been on the horizon, such as entering into teenage or reaching the age of legal responsibility.

Of course, these national or personal holidays should never overshadow the observance of God's holy days. They are not on a par with, nor should they be elevated to, the importance of the festivals of God which reveal His plan and thereby convey great spiritual significance.

Taken all together, the Christian life is one of deep religious conviction coupled with vigorous activity, serious accomplishment, sound-minded balance and common sense. As he applies God's principles to every facet of his life, the Christian strives to meet the challenges of becoming fully successful while living above reproach before both God and man. □

SUMMARY: Read these scriptures in your own Bible:

- **Acts 11:26 – Disciples called “Christians”**
- **Romans 8:9 – One without the Holy Spirit is not of Christ.**
- **Matthew 4:4 – We must live by every word of God.**
- **1 John 2:6 – We ought to walk the same way in which He walked.**
- **John 13:35 – True disciples love one another.**
- **John 15:12 – True disciples love one another.**
- **Acts 5:32 – God gives His Holy Spirit only to those who obey Him.**
- **James 2:19 – Demons believe too and shudder.**
- **Ephesians 4:24 – Christians put on the new man.**
- **Ephesians 6:13-17 – A true Christian puts on the armor of God.**
- **Galatians 2:20 – Christ lives in true Christians.**
- **James 1:27 – Pure religion is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and remain unspeckled from the world.**
- **Romans 14:13 – Do not judge one another.**
- **2 Corinthians 10:12 – Do not make spiritual comparisons.**
- **James 3 – Do not gossip or spread rumors.**
- **Ephesians 4:13 – Compare yourself to the fullness of Christ.**
- **Galatians 6:2 – Bear one another's burdens.**
- **1 Corinthians 2:9 – The Spirit of God makes us to know Godly things.**
- **Proverbs 1:7 – The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.**
- **1 Timothy 5:8 – A true Christian provides for his own family.**
- **1 Peter 3:15 – Be ready with an answer for those that ask of the hope in you.**
- **Colossians 3:17 – Do all in the name of Jesus Christ.**
- **1 Corinthians 10:31 – Do all to the glory of God.**
- **2 Timothy 1:7 – God has given us a sound mind.**

Continued next page

QUESTIONS (ANSWERS BELOW):

1. A true Christian is one...
 - a) who is baptized. b) who has accepted Jesus Christ as savior.
 - c) who has the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. d) who attends church regularly.
 2. A true Christian...
 - a) has an attitude of mind and behavior that is consistent with the teaching and life of Jesus Christ.
 - b) follows God's way of life as expressed through His laws.
 - c) respects his or her fellow man.
 - d) strives for success in all areas of his or her active, abundant life.
 - e) all of the above
 3. Disciples of Christ were called "Christians" because they were imitators and followers of the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. True or False?
 4. The term "Christian" today is extremely loosely and inaccurately used. True or False?
 5. Which statement describes a true Christian?
 - a) one who is born and reared in a Christian culture.
 - b) one who professes a belief in the person of Christ and acknowledges Him as savior.
 - c) one who is an imitator and follower of the person and teachings of Jesus Christ.
 - d) all of the above.
 6. To be a Christian, one must have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. True or False?
 7. Before one can be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, he or she must...
 - a) repent of sins. b) express faith in Christ. c) accept Christ as personal savior. d) all of the above.
 8. A true Christian must live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. True or False?
 9. The greatest expression of obedience to God is demonstration of love toward God and toward neighbor. True or False?
 10. To express love and obedience to God, one must have the _____ [what]?
 11. Christianity is...
 - a) believing. b) a way of life.
 12. A Christian is one whose whole outlook and frame of mind is in the process of transforming from carnal to spiritual. True or False?
 13. What scripture speaks of "pure religion undefiled"?
 - a) Galatians 2:20 b) James 1:27 c) Romans 14:13 d) Galatians 6:2
 14. The Christian should strive to avoid...
 - a) judging others. b) making spiritual comparisons. c) offending those who are weak.
 - d) gossiping or spreading rumors. e) all of the above.
-

15. Complete this sentence: According to Ephesians 4:13, a true Christian is to compare himself or herself with _____ [whom]?
16. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we are made to know Godly things. True or False?
17. A Christian strives toward gaining eternal life and entering the God family. True or False?
18. Christians are to be great examples of both spiritual and physical success. True or False?
19. God wants the Christian to be successful in all aspects of their physical lives. True or False?
20. Which of the following are false.
- a) Christians should debate religion with others.
 - b) Christians should get others to believe as they do.
 - c) Christians should try to convert others.
21. Which positive qualities should a Christian demonstrate?
- a) Giving as opposed to getting.
 - b) Serving instead of being served.
 - c) Love instead of selfishness.
 - d) Accomplishing and building rather than tearing down.
 - e) All of the above.
22. In the final analysis, all Christians should be totally identical in personality, personal tastes or preferences. True or False?
23. Which of the following should be part of the Christian life?
- a) Use of tobacco.
 - b) Good nutrition in a balanced diet.
 - c) Avoiding bodily injury.
 - d) Proper amounts of exercise and sleep.
 - e) Moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages.
 - f) Use of illegal drugs in any form.
24. In matters of dress, the Bible teaches balance, good taste, quality and modesty. True or False?
25. The church has no specific doctrine concerning the celebration of birthdays. True or False?
26. Holidays should never overshadow the observance of God's Holy Days. They are not on a par with nor should they be elevated to the importance of the Holy Days of God. True or False?

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR — ANSWERS:

- | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. (c) | 5. (c) | 9. (true) | 12. (true) | 16. (true) | 20. (all) | 24. (true) |
| 2. (e) | 6. (true) | 10. (Holy Spirit) | 13. (b) | 17. (true) | 21. (e) | 25. (true) |
| 3. (true) | 7. (d) | 11. (b) | 14. (e) | 18. (true) | 22. (false) | 26. (true) |
| 4. (true) | 8. (true) | 15. (Christ) | 19. (true) | 23. (b,c,d) | | |



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