

FAMILY - WHO'S WHO IN THE N.T. ELM MAR 1994

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These notes, composed from 2013 on, are based on taped lectures given between 1977 and 1997 by Dr. Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., formerly the Head of Theology for the Worldwide Church of God; he resigned in January 1974 because of his unresolved doctrinal issues with the administration. Sadly Dr. Martin died in January 2002, a great loss to the world and to those who seek Biblical truth.

Knowing more about the personalities in the Bible, their character and relationships of the people mentioned, and those who wrote the books will increase our ability to understand more about both the Old and New Testament. It can be very instructive regarding the theme. It is all too easy to read familiar passages, and to read right over much important information put there for our edification.

God is shown to be a family, so it is no surprise that the Bible, His Word to us, is full of information which focuses on matters about family matters. The main characters in the Bible were the Patriarchs, the strong leaders of families.

Adam was the first patriarch of all men as we see from the first six chapters of Genesis. Then the Bible focuses on Noah who became the patriarch of all people on the face of the earth today through his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth and their three wives. The Bible focuses then on Shem his thirdborn child.

Then from Genesis 12, the story concentrates on Abram, who became Abraham and his son Isaac who was the most important, had Esau and Jacob whose name was changed to Israel, had twelve sons. One of them, Judah became the root of the Davidic dynasty which would lead to Christ. Another son was Levi who became the very important priestly line officiating in the Temple as God's priests. The 'leastborn' was Benjamin, a juvenile delinquent.

Moses and his brother Aaron who led the Israelites out of Egypt were Levites.

God concentrates on family relationships. Although the Bible is full of family relationships, it is not indicating a form of nepotism which usually has the negative connotation of favouritism and power being retained among relatives, not at all. It simply shows that is how God works with human beings, and that working with strong families with good leadership characteristics, of course not in a tyrannical manner, but their good

qualities will persist through generations, and it is part of how God is working out His plan with His family here on earth.

It is normal that family members have a closer relationship that they might with others outside the family. Of course, and so it is with God. It is normal with matters of law in our day, where wills, and property may be directed by the courts to be executed in fairness among the family members and others who cannot agree.

Who are the people in the New Testament? Many of the main characters in the New Testament are linked to each other in family relationships. The two genealogies of Christ in Matthew and Luke are the legal, idealized human lines. However, it is important to understand that although Jesus grew in Mary's womb, and she gave birth to Christ, neither Joseph's sperm nor Mary's ovum were involved in the making of Christ's body. Christ's body was made miraculously in heaven by God the Father, and a fertilized ovum implanted by God into Mary's womb, so she acted as a surrogate mother.

Children are being born in our era of fertilised ova with sperm which are placed in the womb's of surrogate mothers, which was not the case back then, but now we can see this mechanism working.

Had Mary's ovum been involved, then sin would have passed from Adam into Jesus Christ's body. This is not possible as Christ was sinless, though a true man, He was a true 'anthropos', a real man, but made by God. After all, God made Adam from dust, did He not? So it was no problem for God to make His own Son's embryo which grew in Mary over the normal nine month period of pregnancy.

After Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph had normal sexual relations, and they had six children, quite an extensive family. No doubt there were many childhood squabbles as there are with all children, many of whom were probably initially skeptical about Jesus until the death and resurrection of Christ, but as they grew up, they eventually became enthusiasts of Christ's teaching.

When he was risen He showed himself to 500 people at a time, and His family members and tens of thousands had come to witness the many irrefutable proofs and miracles that He performed. Although Christ said that a prophet is not accepted in his own country.

Acts 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

James was the firstborn of the union of Joseph and Mary, and he became the Apostle who was the head of the early ecclesia, many of whom were related directly to Jesus Christ. James became very prominent and well known after the death and resurrection of Christ. James wrote the epistle of James, and Jude, who was also Jesus' half brother, wrote the short epistle in the N.T.

Mary had sisters, one was called Salome and was married to Zebedee. Salome and Zebedee had children, 'James the less' and John were first cousins of Jesus. John who was a first cousin to Christ was given charge to take care of Mary until her death.

John 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved (John the apostle), he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were priestly Aaronites, and parents of John the Baptist who was six months older than Jesus, but grew up with Him, and knew Him all through His childhood.

Luke 1:5 5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

Abijah, was in the 8th order of the chief priests, 242 in number, in the time of Christ. Elizabeth it seems was probably past child bearing age, but through a miracle John the Baptist was born. Some think of him of somewhat of a wild man, but he had short hair though as all priests did. John the Baptist, who was to be the greatest of all the prophets as Jesus said, and he and Jesus were cousins.

John the Baptist started preaching around thirty years old, during a Sabbatical year when most farmers were able to come and hear him preach. Repent ye, said John the Baptist. Thousands did, and when he

saw Jesus coming towards him he not only recognized Him, but saw him as the Lamb of God.

John 1:28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. 29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. 35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; 36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

For family members to think other family members were important is as far from usual as you can get. Perhaps they are in collusion, when it comes to matters of spirituality going on that some would criticize anyone who seemed to be pre-eminent. They had seen Christ grow up through childhood, and children will squabble, but hopefully they grow out of it. Although they later became ardent and powerful Christians, but that came later.

God does not see us out in left field, or at the boundary, he sees us as closely related to Him. Because human beings are part of God's family, it is no wonder that some get 'grace' and 'special' treatment at different times, not because of any righteousness on our part, but simply because we are of the predestined group, the elect, that God has planned for some of His children.

Here we are on this earth which is like a speck of dust, which it is when we look at the enormity of the universe filled with billions of vast galaxies, which the Bible tells us is to become the final place where God is to reside and control everything in all His creation.

Christ said that the first should be last, last should be first, and that principle applies to many situations in the Bible. At present, we are the 'leastborn', but as such are to become of great prominence in the world to come.

B side.

The Bible from Genesis to Revelation is all about families, and often as not, it is the 'leastborn' who rise to prominence. We are here on earth as God's human children to learn the principles of true, right, and spiritual values embodied in Godly family relationships.

At present we are still 'leastborn'! Look in the mirror, and what do we see? Weakness, frailty, lack of wisdom, and that we are extremely limited in our creative powers compared to God! Yet, if some characters from Biblical times could be here to see the marvels and incredible accomplishments that humans have created in the last century, they would think we were gods indeed! But we are still so incredibly short of God's creative powers, there is absolutely no comparison.

We are here on earth as humans for a brief moment of 70 years or so to learn to love each other as the 'New Commandment' in the New Testament books of the law, the Gospels and Acts. They spell out our responsibilities of family leadership that we have towards each other, although our happiness is very limited now, it is all with the end in view that in time to come, reborn, we can learn to be truly happy.

This 'happiness' is not going to happen to any great degree as long as we have the frailties of humans, but as spirit beings in the resurrection, we shall be put back into 'kindergarten class' to really learn what it means to be part of God's family, and become more able to teach that information to human beings so they, in turn, can enjoy a greater happiness than anyone ever imagined before.

The Bible is not a 'religious' book as most have come to regard it. It is the most accurate history book, a very scientific book, and an amazing 'rulebook' to give humans a behavioural framework.

The principle of 'leastborn' started with Adam as Seth, the 'leastborn' was the one to carry on the line as the 5th chapter of Genesis outlines. Then it was Noah's 'leastborn' Shem who was born after Japheth and Ham, who carried on the 'righteous' line.

Abram who became Abraham when he was 99 years old was the 'leastborn' of Terah. Isaac was a miraculous 'leastborn' when Abraham was 100 years old. Isaac was 60 when Jacob and Esau were born.

Jacob was not married until he was 86 when most men married at 25 or 30. Then with two wives and two concubines, his wife Rachel had two children Esau and Jacob and then died in childbirth. Jacob's 'leastborn' got the birthright blessings by his father crossing his hands.

Jacob had twelve sons, Ephraim and Manasseh were prominent, and Benjamin was a juvenile delinquent but eventually 'grew up', and one of his descendants, Mordecai, 'saved the day' for the Jewish Nation in the time of Esther.

in the 5th Century B.C. King Ahasuerus ruled over all from India to Ethiopia, a vast empire. The king had requested of his wife Vashti that she appear in the court dressed in her finest, but she refused. So his advisers told the king to seek another wife, and after having seen many virgins, King Ahasuerus selected Esther and loved her above all others, but Esther was a Jewess although this had never been revealed to anyone on Mordecai's instructions.

There was a plot to kill the king, Mordecai heard of it, and told Esther about it, who told her husband, King Ahasuerus.

Esther 2:21 In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus.

22 And the thing (plot) was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

King Ahasuerus set a man called Haman over all the princes that attended him. The king had commanded that everyone give obedience and respect to Haman, but Mordecai, a Jew, refused to bow to Haman who hated him for it, and determined to have Mordecai killed and all those who were Jews.

Esther 3:8 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people (the Jews) scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. 9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries. 10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

So Haman organized letters to the whole kingdom of over 190 provinces authorizing the murder of all Jews on a certain day.

Esther 3:13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

So it looked as if virtually the whole Jewish nation would be wiped out by decree of the King due to Haman's hatred of Mordecai. The king had a law that no person could come to his court unless invited, but he saw Esther in the outer court, and extended his scepter to invite her to enter. The king asked Esther what he could give her, to the half of his kingdom, and Esther invited the King and Haman to a royal banquet she would organize.

Meanwhile Haman had ordered a gallows to be built fifty cubits high (75 feet!) upon which he intended to hang Mordcai on the day appointed for the extermination of the Jews.

The king could not sleep that night, and had his records of events brought to him so that he could read them. He read the entry about the two who plotted the death of the king, and that Mordecai had informed on them and saved the life of the king, and that nothing had been done to reward Mordecai for his loyalty.

Ahaseuarus called for Haman asked what should be done to the man that the king delighted to honour. Haman replied, clothe him in royal apparel, give him a horse, and bring him through the city for all to see how the king honours someone.

As Esther entered the banquet, the king asked her what her petition was, and she told him about the plan to destroy the Jews of which she was one. The king asked who would presume such a thing, and Esther told the king it was Haman. Haman was caught by the king in the act of throwing himself on Esther's bed to plead with her for his life. The king saw this, suspected Haman was about the rape his wife, and ordered his immediate execution on the gallows he had built to hang Mordecai.

Esther implored the king to reverse the decree to kill all Jews, and he instantly complied. The king gave the ring he had previously given to Haman, and all the powers Haman had, and his house to Mordecai, and set him second in the kingdom. God moves in amazing ways His wonders to perform for His people!

So Mordecai, a Benjaminite, a 'leastborn', was responsible for saving the whole Jewish nation from destruction that day.

The Temple was built in Benjaminite territory on Mount Horeb, and in fact the Temple prophesied to come at the end time will also be built on the Mount of Olives which was also in Benjaminite's 'leastborn' territory.

Moses and Aaron who was three years older, came from the tribe of Levi, and again Moses was a 'leastborn'.

The prophet Samuel told Jesse to bring his children to him, and he brought his 1st born, then the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th born child, and the prophet said, is that all of them? And Jesse said and "I have a lad who is tending sheep", and the prophet said I want to see him, and it was David. So the 'leastborn' of Jesse became the king who started the dynasty that led to Christ, who will rule the twelve tribes in the Kingdom of God, again the 'leastborn' was chosen by God.

Jeremiah prophesied in the land of Benjamin.

Jeremiah 1:1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:

This 'leastborn' is an astonishing thread to behold through the scriptures, which it would have been all too easily read right over and the significance of the principle missed had this not been revealed to Dr. Martin. The 'leastborn' principle continues into the New Testament.

At the last supper, who sat next to Christ? They were Levites, priests, showing the importance of priestliness to the Messiah, John His cousin, who was a priest and knew the Chief Priest, and was the disciple that Christ loved was on one side, and Judas on the other. When Judas realized what he had done, he entered the Temple, which only priests were allowed to do, and cast the 30 pieces of silver directly in the Holy Place.

The first Gentile to be called of God was the Ethiopian Eunuch of Ham, about as far away from Israel, the 'chosen' of God as could be imagined, again a 'leastborn'. Then there was Cornelius, a Roman officer in the occupying army, but a Gentile, and so in that sense a 'leastborn'. God consistently uses the opposite of the 'firstborn' to do His work. Astonishing!

Paul, which means 'small' or 'little' refers to himself as the 'least' of all the Apostles. And to cap it all, he was a Benjaminite, a 'leastborn' again! In the

inspired order of the books of the New Testament, Paul's writings, fourteen books, the largest number of books anyone wrote that were included in the Bible, come last after the 'general' epistles, just before the book of Revelation. Paul the last and the 'least' gave us the most! We are indeed indebted to the tribe of Benjamin, not the least for Paul, and the fact that the end time Temple will be built on their territory.

So from the beginning, God has used the 'leastborn' rather than the 'firstborn' to pursue His purposes and execute His plan.

1 Corinthians 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

Again, neither a sperm from Joseph, or and ovum from Mary were involved in the conception of Jesus Christ, otherwise sin would have passed into the fetus. To avoid this issue, the Catholic church invented the notion of the 'immaculate conception', so that Mary could not pass on sin to Jesus, but this is a nonsense.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Jesus Christ, the Creator of all things by the Father, His fertilized egg was miraculously created by God from part of Himself, and inserted into Mary's womb to grow and develop until His birth. Just as God created Adam, and then Eve, so the Father created his Son. Surrogate motherhood is now a regular occurrence in our era, where a fertilized egg is place in a woman who nourishes the baby in her body until it is born.

God's Word, the Bible, is all about God's Family, and the human family He has created through Jesus Christ.

God is a family. We humans are now part of that family in Jesus Christ who sits on the right hand of the Father in heaven. We are viewed by the Father as perfect as is Christ, and because we are in Him, we are also sinless and part of the Divine Family. Although begotten now, and not yet fully developed, nevertheless we are part of God's family now, and will be fully integrated into His Family at the resurrection. This is 'fullness' of the amazing 'mystery' that was revealed to Paul in 63 A.D.

