

CHOOSE THE RIGHT HEROES

“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days-- and also afterwards-- when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.” (Gen 6:4 NIV)

The pre-flood world was in a downward spiral to destruction. The trajectory of their evil was steepened, and its speed increased, by their heroes. Those whom they considered to be “men of renown” had thoughts that were only evil continually. Little children came to respect, admire, and emulate these men who were corrupt to the core. Unfortunately, the more famous these heroes became, the more corrupt were those who followed their example. Finally, God looked at man and recognized that “every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (Gen. 6:5). As Peter wrote: “The world of that was deluged with water and destroyed” (2 Pet. 3:6).

Noah, as you know, was an exception to the rule. He lived in the same generation, but was a “righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God” (Gen. 6:9). Unfortunately, however, he was not a “hero”. Great crowds did not assemble to hear him speak. Teen-age girls did not have his picture on the wall, and pregnant women did not want to name their babies after him. No one cared to get his autograph, emulate his life style, or seek his advice. How sad! The only ones who honored Noah were the members of his immediately family.

In 2006 the Office of National Statistics (ONS) revealed that “Mohammed” remains the most popular Muslim name given to baby boys in England and Wales. The name “Mohammed” actually means “one who is praiseworthy”, or “hero”. Mohammed, as you know, was a 7th century prophet who was the founder of Islam. He was a ruthless warrior who killed men and made slaves of women and children. He married at least 11 women in 14 years . Ayesha, his favorite wife, was only 6 years old. We should not be surprised that the man who was the primary architect of the September 11th attacks was named “Khalid Sheikh Mohammed”. He bragged about killing Daniel Pearl with these infamous words: “I decapitated with my blessed right hand the head of the American Jew Daniel Pearl in the city of Karachi, Pakistan. For those who would like to confirm, there are pictures of me on the Internet holding his head.” Certainly our heroes play an important part in the course of our conduct.

It ought to be a cause for concern when children choose heroes whose thoughts are only evil continually. Sometimes these precious little ones are trapped in a Muslim enclave where they are schooled in a madras and have little or no exposure to a different role model or life style. Others might live in a drug infested ghetto where gang bangers, and drug dealers are the heroes whose personas dominate the neighborhood. On the other side of town more affluent families may choose to idolize the unrestrained perversion of wealthy actors and actresses. Parents and teachers need to understand the influence that heroes have in influencing the lives of those who hold them in high esteem. Abraham Lincoln, for example, idolized George Washington. The mass murders of Columbine High School idolized Adolph Hitler.

God willing, we will be studying as a church through the book of **NEHEMIAH** . I hope he will become a hero to many. His name literally means “Compassion of Yah (or Jehovah)” He came from a prominent family. He was a high ranking official in the royal court of Artaxerxes (the King of Persia). He was a great distance away from the rubble and ruins of Jerusalem, yet, he felt the call of God to roll up his sleeves and clean up the mess. After much prayer, he was willing to risk his relationship with the king, his fortune, and even his life to answer the call of God. He refused to be deterred by difficulties and dangers. He refused to quit when he became the object of ridicule and scorn. His steadfast determination became the catalyst that brought together and inspired the discouraged and scattered people of God. He is one of my heroes.

It is my prayer that he will be your hero too! As we study about Nehemiah, it is important to remember that the prophets of God labored with the realization that a large part of their ministry was for generations yet to come (1 Pet. 1:12). This helps us to remember that someone is watching us and will be influenced for good or evil by the lives that we live.