

I have not done it yet, but one of these days I want to do the “**23 and Me**” DNA testing. According to this test, we now have the scientific ability to help an individual figure out where lots of their ancestors have come from. They give you a listing of percentages of different nationalities or regions that are in fact in each of us. Does anyone think this would be a great thing to know about yourself? Does anyone *NOT* think this would be a great thing to know about yourself?

I had never really thought about this, but could you find something out from your own DNA that would make you uncomfortable? What if, for all of your life you had been told that Irish people are no-good trouble-makers? What if you had believed that *all of your life*, but then you send in the test... and what do you learn when you get it back? **47% IRISH!** Boy, what do you do then? As for myself, I will be happy to find out the mystery of my ancestors. I have no idea what the results will say. But I don't care. I am me because I am me. I don't believe that I am given an advantage or that I am held back because of the DNA of my ancestors. But sadly, a lot of people have thought this through out human history. *You are who you are because of your ancestors. It is DNA. It is racial.* No, actually it's just racist. To think that your life is determined or controlled by your genetic background is just silly. We are more than our DNA. We are more than our genes. I wish we all could have these DNA tests because it just might show that ALL of us are Heinz 57s far more than we might have thought, that we all are a big mix of lots of different people and places from very long ago, probably thousands and thousands of years.

I long for the day when we will come to believe that there is only one race, the Human Race, and that we are all family on this planet. I wish that so much. But today I wish for something else. It seems clear that people get all hung up on all sorts of

things about who we are and whether we are the right group of people or whether we are the wrong group of people. People have been hung up about these things for too long. But here on the day after Epiphany 2018, we need to acknowledge something that I think we need to understand and put into our minds: We are technically Gentiles, Gentes, Ethnes, Goyim, we are not Jewish people. We are not connected to Abraham and Moses by blood. Our ancestors from 23 and Me were in fact not people who knew the God of Israel. Our ancestors, although we cannot prove it from the DNA test, our ancestors were probably more likely to worship thunderstorms and mountains and the Moon than we were to have lived in Covenant with the LORD God, maker of Heaven and earth. That is a simple fact.

We are told in Ephesians that this was so. Paul or one of his disciples tells us *“So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles, remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”* Wow! That is a pretty serious thing to need to remember. Our ancestors were in darkness, having no hope, and without God in the world! It seems pretty clear that this is not something to brag about, this is not a source of pride. **Yes, my ancestors danced drunk at Stonehenge in England in the moonlight! Yes, my ancestors were in darkness, having no hope, and without God!** But then God did something, *my ancestors did not do it, GOD did it. “But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* That is my favorite verse, by the way. It will be on my headstone. Ephesians 2.13. This is my story. In fact this is the story for us all. All our ancestors who have been brought to God have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Jesus, in a very

mysterious way, even though he is Jewish, functions as the link that brings all the non-Jewish or Gentile people directly to God. Paul tells us in Romans that God did this on purpose and this way.

Does it matter what we think about ourselves? Well, yes it does. Should we have some self-esteem and self-respect? Sure. Should we feel good about who we are? Sure. It is a lot better than feeling badly about who we are. But what happens if we start to think too highly of ourselves? What if we feel superior, that our lives are worth more than the lives of others? Could anything bad come from such attitudes? Yes. It usually does. Paul warns us again in Romans saying ***“I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”***

If there is one key belief and position for us to hold at the time of Epiphany, it should be this: we are chosen late in the game. We were not first or second round draft picks by God. Others were called by God long before we were. There is no room for pride, for arrogance. There can only be humility. We were chosen late. So we should never act like we are better than others, that we are the best, that we are the Victors, that we have every right to strut before others. We cannot think that we are always the good guys, that we are always right, that we are always the best, that our lives are more important than the lives of others. We cannot think that God loves us best!

I hope that we can start to connect some dots here. And what I really hope is that we make sure that our beliefs about Christmas are mixed in with beliefs we should have about Epiphany. Our ancestors lived in the darkness until three of them decided to follow a star that led us to God's light. Let this be in our hearts today and always. AMEN.