

FROM OUR PASTOR

July 1, 2017

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

They can mow your lawn, taxi you almost anywhere, do your shopping, mix your drinks, patrol the streets, and deliver packages to your door. Not people, ROBOTS! Robots are almost everywhere and increasingly in more and more industries. They are doing more and more things that only people used to do.

Some robots are machines that you punch buttons on, say to get your favorite flavor of yogurt or Mac and fries. Some, however, are made to look and act very much like humans and can fool the unwary. There are reports from the UK that engineers are working on covering robots with human skin, although that may not be necessary considering how realistic humanoid robots already look. Building robots with changing "personalities" is already well along in the development stage.

As a way to deal with the increasing costs of labor, many companies are turning to robots in an effort to hold down costs--especially hourly wage and medical insurance costs. Wendy's restaurants recently announced that 1,000 workers will be replaced by robots. Other well-known chains are following suit. Government protections and special status are sure to follow. A few months ago, RT.com reported, "A European Parliament committee has voted in favor of a draft report that proposes granting legal status to robots, categorizing them as "electronic persons"." One has to wonder, can the meaning of the word "person" undergo any more changes?

We already deal with robots every day--such as the irritating phone answering trees--and many more are coming. So, what will be the effect on people? It is easy to already see: Damaged or non-existent relationships. We were created by our God to need relationships with other people and with our Creator. We were not created to bond with and share with machines.

Our human needs and nature are described in God's word. Consider some of these truths:

- Proverbs 18:24 "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Can a machine do this?
- Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity In times of trouble, can you pour out your feelings to a machine?
- Proverbs 27:9 Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel. Can a machine give hearty counsel in a way described as sweet?

People are becoming more plugged in to devices and tuned out to people with every passing year. As a result, depression is common and increasing suicides among young

people is on the rise. When a young man or girl has no core anchor values and lacks bonded relationships with those who they can depend on, tragedy is too often the result when life's challenges are faced.

Jesus Christ wants His followers to have a rewarding relationship with the Father, Jesus Christ, and each other. One of Jesus' final instructions was, " These things I command you, that you love one another," John 15:7. The Apostle Paul later instructed the church at Rome: Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another..." Romans 12:10.

There are certainly terrible and difficult times looming in the coming years. Jesus Christ warned "Then there shall be a time of trouble such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." Mathew 24:21.

When those days come to pass, we will not turn to machines to comfort and encourage us. People will only have others they know and love and their Creator God to depend on.

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