

Lesson for November 16, 2008

Old Testament Survey

The Book of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is the last of the books written by Moses, which we call the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy consists primarily of the parting counsel of Moses to the children of Israel. Moses was aware that his ministry was at an end and that he would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Still, Moses coveted the blessings of God for the Israelites. The message of the book of Deuteronomy to the people of Israel is to be true to Jehovah and obey His law.

Moses begins the book by reviewing the past history of the nation of Israel and its many failures. The old rebellious generation was dying off and was forbidden to go into the land of promise. Moses wanted to make sure that the new generation did not forget God's covenant with the nation of Israel and the Law, which had been established for the nation of Israel. (Deuteronomy 5:1-22)

Moses not only reminds the new generation of the reasons their parents and relatives will not enter the land, he also reminds them of recent victories over their enemies. Moses assures the people of Israel that with Joshua as their new leader he will lead them to many victories over their enemies as well. (Deuteronomy 4:23)

In his second speech, Moses reviews the Law and reminds them that God made a covenant with them and that they are obligated to keep the Law. The Ten Commandments are repeated, which are based on divine establishment principles for all Israelites (believer and unbeliever).

Once in the land, Moses urges the nation to abstain from any and all forms of idolatry. They are to worship only God in the manner described in the Law of Moses. They are also to separate themselves from pagan idol worshippers to avoid the corruption of pagan gods.

Finally, Moses lays out the "ground rules" for blessings and curses for the nation. If the nation will obey God and keep His commandments the nation will prosper. If, on the other hand, the nation rebels, exile and bondage will be the result. To reinforce the words of Moses, he instructs the people to read these blessings and curses before the nation when they enter the Promised Land.

The last record Moses leaves is the recounting of the birth and childhood of the nation and God's gracious provision and patience with them. Moses expresses his praise to God for His care of the nation. Before his death, Moses is allowed to view the Promised Land from Mount Nebo.

Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)

This *unconditional* covenant was a confirmation of an earlier promise to Abraham regarding the Promised Land. Though it seems from some statements that this is a conditional covenant, the only condition was time (when, as a nation, Israel accepts Jesus Christ as their Messiah), and this does not make it conditional. It was a part of an unconditional covenant to Abraham and cannot be changed. In other words, "When Israel, as a nation, returns to the Lord and accepts Christ as Messiah then God will fulfill His covenant." We know from other passages that Israel will indeed return to the Lord in the future. There are seven elements to this covenant:

- 1) The nation of Israel will be dispersed – v. 1-3
- 2) Israel will have a change of mind regarding Christ as Messiah – v. 1-3
- 3) Their Messiah will return – v. 3-6
- 4) Israel will be restore to the land – v.5
- 5) Israel will accept Christ as Messiah – v. 4-8
- 6) Israel's enemies will be judged – v. 7
- 7) Israel will receive her full blessing from God – v.9

Divine Establishment

Sometime in eternity past God the Father designed a plan for mankind based upon His grace, His righteousness, His justice and His perfect character. God is perfect and His plan is perfect, even with the introduction of man, who would become imperfect. God's plan depends on God's grace: in salvation Jesus Christ accomplishes the plan; in the Christian Way of Life the Holy Spirit accomplishes the plan; in eternity God the Father accomplishes the plan. It is always God who accomplishes the plan. Therefore, it is always GRACE. (John 3:16,18; Ephesians 1:1-14; I Corinthians 12:4-11; II Corinthians 5:8)

Divine Laws

Under God's grace policy certain principles or divine laws were established to ensure the function and the perpetuation of the human race. These principles or laws are called *Divine Establishment* and are given by God to believers and unbelievers alike. Within these laws there is no discrimination based on race, nationality, gender or any other factor. God's laws of divine establishment apply equally to all members of the human race in all dispensations. This means that anyone, believer or unbeliever, can have a peaceful, happy life if they apply these principles. On the other hand, failure to abide by these principles or laws by individuals or nations brings only disaster, as we will see.

Divine Institutions

A divine institution is a law or principle established by God for the entire human race for all dispensations. There are four:

- 1) *Freewill* – Free will sets up the potential for everything in life. It guarantees the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Violation of God's establishment laws or the laws of the land can, however, negate this potential. Free will also guarantees human freedom and privacy. It is this institution that gives every human being the right to accept or reject Jesus Christ as Savior. Attempting to force people to believe in Christ and forming a "Christian nation" is tyranny. Our forefathers did not come to this country to establish a Christian nation. They came so that they could practice religious freedom: all religions. (John 3:16,18,36)
- 2) *Marriage* - Biblical marriage is a union between one man and one woman. It is a function for the protection of freedom, as the man fulfills his responsibility of protecting his wife and children. The stability of a nation depends upon the institution of marriage. Breakdown of marriages and the home inevitably leads to the destruction of that nation. Marriage guidelines are presented throughout Scripture for the believer and the unbeliever alike. For the believer, God has provided *detailed* guidelines for marriage, which include such instructions as to marry only another believer. God has a right man and a right woman for every Christian. We must remember that a person is no better in marriage than he or she is as an individual. Divine establishment principles of marriage apply equally to all persons. (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:21-33)
- 3) *Family* – The family is designed by God for the perpetuation of the human race. Procreation brings new human beings into the world with freewill who must be protected and trained. Children who are trained properly by their parents grow up to be good citizens of the nation, whether they are believers or not. One of the basic concepts that needs to be taught is *respect for authority*. This includes (but is not limited to) God, the Word of God, parents, teachers, government, police officers, etc. Proper training assures at least a good possibility that a person will utilize the laws of divine establishment, even if they don't call them by that name. (Ephesians 6:1-4)
- 4) *Nationalism* – In order to provide protection for a nation and its citizens, God established the authority of human government. The concept of a nation was established to provide the basic freedoms. These freedoms are privacy, the right to succeed or fail, protection from outside predators, freedom to accept or reject Jesus Christ, freedom of worship and free enterprise. By following this divine establish law of nationalism, believers and unbelievers are free to pursue their dreams. (Genesis 10:5; Deuteronomy 32:8; Romans 13:1-7)

Divine Form of Government

In order to prevent people from destroying themselves, God introduced human government as a ruling factor for the nation. Human government was given by God for all nations. It was the confusion of languages and the dispersion of mankind that God used to introduce human government into the human race. Tribal or clan leaders sat as a governing board for various nations. (Genesis 11:1-9)

As history has progressed, nations have risen and fallen, some good, some bad, but the concept of nations still exists. It is when individual nations exist under a "one-world government" (as in the Tribulation) that marriage and family will disintegrate and the practice of nationalism will not be allowed. Nations are designed by God for the perpetuation of the human race, for freedom to accept or reject Jesus Christ, freedom to worship, freedom to succeed or fail and protection from interior and exterior predators. It is mankind that corrupts this divine institution and introduces evil into a national entity.

A Biblical pattern for a nation is one where freedom exists for all people (believers and unbelievers) and is governed by "the common good for all" concept. This pattern rejects anything that would subvert or corrupt the nation. This subversion or corruption can be, but is not limited to, music, art, literature and drama (including movies and television in our culture). When these cultural activities become corrupt, the people of the influenced nation begin to act out the pattern of behavior that they are being taught by the various medias. This bad behavior eventuates in several cycles of divine discipline, until the nation is destroyed from within or from without. Only a nation that remains true to the Biblical concept of a nation will prosper and survive.

Divine Authority

Without authority the human race would be in such a chaotic condition that it would rival the days of Noah and the Flood. The ultimate authority, of course, is God, but He has given mankind these divine establishment laws and a government entity to enforce them so that we can live happy, productive lives in an atmosphere of freedom. Believers and unbelievers alike can enjoy their lives on earth if they adhere, either consciously or unconsciously, to the principles of Divine Establishment. The difference is that the believer has the power of the Holy Spirit and his eternal destination is Heaven. Therefore, the believer has no excuse for living a life of inferiority and yet we see it everyday. Why? The reason is *volition*, Divine Institution number one. Often, the unbeliever who applies these principles is a much better person and exhibits more of the character of Jesus Christ (without knowing it, of course) than the believer who has rejected the authority of God in his life (Bible doctrine).