

Clough Deuteronomy Session 12

Deuteronomy 4:9-24 - Why Idolatry More than Social Sins is the Core Threat to a Nation

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Tonight we're going to get into chapter 4 a little bit more deeply and in the introduction on the handout you'll see the outline, where we are; we're in chapter 4, that last section, implications for the future of the nation, and we've already done the first 8 verses where we dealt with the nature of law and its basis, now we're going to get into the substantive portions of this thing. And tonight, verses 4-24, this gets more into the core of the revelation. The first 8 verses deal with the uniqueness of the nation, and to this we need to review a little bit, just for emphasis, several things.

I want to start with this slide, the basis of politics and law, and be sure we understand it. The reason I'm going to show this is because there's a problem that comes up here, is that why in the Old Testament is there such a passionate concern and angst over idolatry. To us, in our 21st century, that seems like a little silly to be worrying about idolatry; we would worry about social problems, corruption, immorality, that sort of thing would be the thing for us, crime. But in the Old Testament it seems like those things take a secondary position to idolatry and so this is something we have to understand from the literature. We can't just come in here and say oh well, that was fine for then but we live in a different age and therefore our concerns are different. If this is the revealed Word of God it must have a structure that is inherently valid, and valid for all time and ages. So when you see a tension arise between a question you have and it seems to be promoted in the culture, and you come to the text of Scripture and it seems like it's talking about over here and you're over here, then that's time to say wait a minute, if I'm going to respect the Word of God somehow God wants us to not be over here but to be over here. So this diagram is an attempt to... you'll see it several times tonight, to give a reason why the Bible is structured the way it is and why the Bible keeps insisting that idolatry is a central concern, a primary concern.

So let's look at the arrow on the right side where it says "pressure of life," and you'll see the arrow goes from the top down to the bottom. And historically this is the pressure that people experience who are in leadership positions, people who are involved in political conflict, people that are worried about what's happening in a society and so on. We start with the political area and in the political area this is where the conflict of social issues are and the issue of social justice and all the rest of it. But when you start working with that you quickly discover that it's not a political issue but underneath the political issue is the ethical issue, what is right, what is wrong, where do values come from. So you have conflicts that manifest; up here is a political problem, but really they're down here as an ethical problem. An example today from our society is what is your attitude toward the quality of life, and there are distinct differences here. And so you can't have a unity up here, it's one of the things that I'm noticing now in our present administration, there's an attempt to say we want to get everybody together and so on, we want to work out our problems, and we don't understand why we have all this turmoil and conflict. Well the answer is because we have conflict

down here at the ethical level; we have distinctly different world views that we didn't have in this country a hundred years ago. So you can't have all harmony and peace up at the political area if you haven't got harmony down at the ethical area.

Well now you start working with the ethical area and then you run into the question, well, what is man? Where do we get morals from? If we are taught in a secular environment, as all our young people are, except for the home schoolers and Christian private schools, if that's the case and we're all evolved mammals, if that's really the case that we are evolved mammals, then how do you explain transcendental moral absolutes. Monkeys don't have absolutes, animals don't have an ethical standard. Animals don't care what is right and what is wrong, they care about what tastes good. So the point is that then you see, when you start grappling with the ethical issue, now you decide oh-oh, now we've got something underneath that; we've got another layer underneath there.

And so now we come to epistemology which is the science of trying to figure out how do we find out things? How do we perceive things? Clearly the dog runs to his bowl and he perceives there's food there. But the dog doesn't have a conceptual frame of reference to say is my master fair to me in giving me this kind of food, fair in the sense of right; I may not like it but the point is, that's not what we're talking about, we're talking about whether it's right or wrong. So now let's look and see what underneath we're talking about what is the nature of the universe? Is there a God that is personal over all the universe or is there just bare impersonal nature. So now we're down at the metaphysical level. So the pressure of trying to deal up here, with everyday life forces you, if you're thinking at all, down, down, down, down until you get into the issue of the nature of the whole cosmos. And that's where the idolatry issue occurs. So that's why I wanted to show you this diagram.

Now on the left side of the diagram you'll see the logical sequence. Once you settle what's going on down here, then you can settle what's down at the epistemological level, then up to the ethics, and then you have a chance at solving some things up here. But you haven't got a Chinaman's chance of solving something up at the top level if you haven't got the ground work done in the lower levels. So that's one of the fundamental things and why up front here in Deuteronomy 4 Moses is going to be hammering this idolatry issue.

We had last time another slide and this is Paul Robert's painting in the Supreme Court Building at Lausanne, he did it in 1905, back in the days when this was understood by... you know, most intelligent people understood this connection. Today the educated person has never been exposed to this, not that people are stupid, it's just that they don't have a clue because nowhere in their education have they ever come across this point. And so once again we point out there's lady Justice, and she's pointing down with no blindfold, she's pointing down with her sword to the Word of God, and you have the litigants down here, you have the judges here, and Paul pointed the judges looking up at her, she is basically telling them look down, look at the Word of God. So that painting, in a nutshell, depicts what justice looks like biblically. Okay, now this is fundamental and there are some points that I'm making in

your handout here that you need to just think about as we get into the text.

The first thing is that what we're dealing with down here in these ideas, this shapes a society. Ideas have consequences; bad ideas have bad consequences. So if you don't get the big great ideas straight you cannot product the fruit because you do not have the roots. So the first thing is righteousness has to come from inside out; that's a biblical principle. Righteousness can't be created by law, forcing a change onto the heart. Now law can restrain, law can give incentives, but as far as a real vibrant righteousness and justice, biblically it's got to come from the inside out. Now if you think about that, isn't that what history is all about? When Jesus Christ comes and He sets up the Millennial Kingdom which will be the first time in human history where you have actually a semi-perfect environment, in that situation why is it we haven't got the Millennial Kingdom yet? Because we don't have regenerate people in an resurrection body that can administer this sort of thing. And who is allowed to start the Millennial Kingdom? Only those who have been regenerated. Talk about discrimination, there's no equality entering the Millennial Kingdom.

So the point is that righteousness has to come from the inside out; that's the fallacy of religious legalism; legalism can never produce the fruits because it doesn't get at the heart. That's what's wrong with Sharia in Islam, trying to impose righteousness from outside in. The Bible is opposite, the Bible says from inside out. Righteousness is genuine only if there is a personal relationship with God, otherwise it's just another legalism. And that's something else you want to observe in the text because I can't emphasize this enough because in the text of Scripture, of Deuteronomy, you will notice again and again the personal relationship between Israel and Jehovah. It's not a decree, it's not a law code, but there's a personal God that's involved here. So there's always that personal relationship and that's why John Adams, operating out of this understanding of Robert, out of that understanding that's what he could say what I have blocked in your handout, where you see: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people." What he's saying by that statement is that if you don't have the material of changed hearts you can have all the constitutions in the world and it doesn't work because you don't have an allegiance that's built into the fabric of the people. Adam's recognized that.

Now another thing, coming to the text tonight of Deuteronomy 4:9, two uniquenesses of Israel; grab onto these because here's one of the great foundations of your personal faith, of why you can say the Old Testament is my authority. The first one is this quote by Albright: Only the Hebrews, so far as we know, made covenants with their gods or God. So here's the historical time line and you have contracts made at points in time, the Abrahamic contract, the Palestinian contract, the Sinaitic contract, that's the picture of Scriptural history. Now this had a consequence which I will show you in the next slide, which is one also we had last time, and that is Kaufmann's statement where he contrasts, and this is the second uniqueness, the first uniqueness of Israel is that they had contracts with their God; no other nations had that.

Secondly, they have a continuing line of prophets; it's not just one person starting a religion and dying and then the religion just somehow goes on. You have a line of prophets century after century after century building a coherent story. And out of this comes a unique application of these two uniquenesses, and that is, it was this concept is what led to historiography. The first historians, contrary to what you learned in many college courses, because they always go back in the history courses, you know, the first guy was Herodotus and Thucydides and they did, those were guys that systematically wrote. But the point was they date five or six hundred years before Jesus, well, three or four hundred years before Jesus. When did the author of... say the book of Joshua or Judges live? When was that book written? That book was written in the second millennium. So if that's the case, in the second millennium, then who are the first historians? It was the Jews.

Now let's ask another question, following on that question. Why were they the historians? What was characteristic of the Jews that was not characteristic of the Greeks? The Greeks didn't have a continuing line of prophets and they didn't have a contract. The historians of Israel were men who wanted to ask the question, has God been faithful to the covenant, or have we been faithful to the covenant? So they were looking both at God and at the covenant. And this is why, if you think about it, think about the book of Judges. Think of the brutal honesty of the Jewish historian. Do you get the impression as you read Old Testament history that it's bias, that it's painting a nice sweetness and light picture about Israel? How could those historians be objective? It was because they had the standards of the Deuteronomic code. That's why this book that you're studying is so important. This is the book that lays the basis for history, because this is the book that expounds the covenant against which subsequent history is measured. And that's how they could do their analyses.

Let's look at Deuteronomy 4:9. Follow with me as we read a few of these verses. "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, [10] especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'" That's an interesting passage. Observe what's said here. Moses, in verse 9, is addressing the people, the second generation. Then he says there's a danger that they're going to forget something, and right after he has that verb "forget," notice the verb there in verse 9, right after that he launches into something about children. So we want to connect that somehow.

So let's look first at verse 9, "take heed to yourself," and I've tried to translate this in crude Hebrew and this is not a polished translation but the reason I did it is because I want you to see how abrupt and picturesque the original language is. It says literally, "take heed to yourself and diligently keep your nephesh." The Hebrew noun "nephesh" is what's translated in your English Bibles as soul. Now be careful, s-o-u-l, the way the Hebrew uses it, is not the same as the way the Greeks use it. Greek thinking means the soul is immaterial, it's sort of...almost a

synonym for spirit. That's not the way the Hebrew uses the term, and it's startling to see how the Hebrew uses this term. But let me give you a quick picture. In Genesis God made a body from the earth; so picture God kneeling down in the Garden, He's got the clay and He's molding the human body. Then what does he do? Second step? He breathes into the nostrils of that material body, whooooo. There's the spirit. And then the Hebrew carefully says, "he became nephesh, the nephesh is the combination of the immaterial and the material. In fact, if you could do a word study, animals have nephesh. So what's unique about the human nephesh, of course, it's made in God's image. But that means that when you see nephesh it's not talking just about your inner life, it's not just talking about the immaterial things. But it's talking about all of your life, all of our life, outside, external, physical, as well as the mental and the spiritual.

So this is why, there's ways of studying this but if you come to... I just took three passages out of Proverbs, they're dozens and dozens of these, but here's an example of that exact Hebrew phrase. I went to the Hebrew language and I picked out the exact phrase and I asked my little computer program to find me that exact phrase. In Proverbs 13:3, "He who guards his mouth keeps his nephesh." Now what do you suppose that's talking about? It's being careful what you say. And what does Jesus say later? What you say in secret will be stated on the housetops in the last judgment. So what we say is very important to the keeping of the nephesh. The second one: "He who keeps his way keeps his nephesh." That means the decisions he makes in his life, are they wise decisions or foolish decisions. And then, "He who keeps the commandment keeps his nephesh," and that involves more the mental, so you kind of summarize these three aspects as, the first one, Proverbs 13:3, "He who guards his mouth," there's the speech aspect, the sins of the tongue, so to speak. Then, "He who keeps his way" is the behavior, and in Proverbs 19:16, "He who keeps the commandment" involves the mental and spiritual.

Now it says in Deuteronomy 4:9, let's finish the sentence, we've looked at that first phrase, "take heed to yourself and keep yourself, lest," and here's a negative purpose, so there's a purpose clause here, there's a consequence. So if you don't do this, if you don't keep your nephesh then something's going to happen. Now many things can happen but the thing that he points to here in the context is he wants the continuity of that nation to survive; he wants the nation to survive, he wants the culture to go on, and so he says here, because remember, he's addressing them as a nation, not just personal individuals, it's the nation. "Lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life," in other words, you're going to forget them and you will never remember them again. Now there are several things about this, but one is that if you look on the handout, you "forget the unique relationship between Yahweh and the nation, and effort is required to remember past historic revelation because it is not continuous. God's revelation, His special revelation in history, comes in punctiliar areas, it comes at Sinai, it comes in Joshua's day, it comes in David's day, and then sometimes it doesn't come at all. And you go for centuries without it. We've gone a thousand years without an active revelation that's added to the text of Scripture.

So that means that our faith, your faith, if you're a Bible believing believer, your faith is a historic faith and that means you have to remember, you have to go back in time, you have to relive in your imagination these great events. That's why I always like the Old Testament as a preface to the New Testament because you want to live, you want to remember. In the Jewish Passover they go through the whole ritual of the Exodus, over and over and over and they want their children to sit there and watch that Pascal procedure so that the kid will remember this happened, because in the Jewish view it says "when you were there at Sinai." Well, the child can say look, I was not... you know, that was 3500 years ago, I wasn't there then. In one way you are; when you become a believer you join God's program and the Holy Spirit illuminates your heart so that you should be able to imagine yourself in these past momentous times in history.

And so Moses says you'd better watch out because if you forget these things and you don't remember and you don't connect with Bible past history you will pay a price; your nation will pay a price; your families will pay a price, and here's the price. So he says "they depart," and it's a positive statement here, you notice the statement at the end of verse 9, the clause, the last clause in verse 9, in my translation it says, "And teach them to your children," and the idea is that the things that your eyes have seen, they were there as the handout points out, Numbers 14:29 shows you their age, that they're going to forget this and he wants them to "teach them to your children," now why is that? Which generation is he talking to? The first or the second? The second. Now when they were little kids, because they saw some of this stuff because they were little, remember they killed off... the first generation was the adults that are responsible, so these people when they were young kids they heard and saw this.

And by the way, what do you notice as you observe the text where it says "the things your eyes have seen," what does that tell you about the content of our faith? Is it an idea or is it revelation that's historically occurred, that you could have photographed with a camera. See, that's the difference between biblical Christianity and everything else. Everybody always talks about the religious ideas; we're not talking about just religious ideas, we're talking about a divine interpretation of history. So "teach them to your children, and your grandchildren." And by the way, as I point out on the bottom of your handout, page 1... I guess I didn't point it out to you, well I will now. No sense of history means no accumulated wisdom and that means an endless learning curve. If parents do not transmit this doctrine, this awareness to their children, then their children are going to go through the same thing, they're going to make the same mistakes, they're going to pay the same price. And we do that generation after generation. That's called stupidity. You cannot advance in society and in history if you don't build on the previous generation. And if you're going to sit there and go back to zero, every generation, and be stupid, then you'll have a stupid, foolish society. You can only do it as you pass on these lessons, otherwise, it's an endless learning curve, you've got to go through the whole thing. This is what we are learning now, bankers, young 20 something's, 30 something's, who have their Masters and PhD's in economics forgot something called the Great Depression. So, the generation of our parents, who had to suffer through the Great Depression, watch 30% unemployment, watch people jump

out of the buildings in New York City on 5th Avenue, splat in the street, who were millionaires before the stock market fell, and had to remember that, and that generation, and you can trace it in your own family, you ask the people who lived in the 1930s and watch their patterns of finances; these people were frugal, they learned that they didn't spend money and waste it because they had suffered through that, and it only took us in this country two generations to loose the lesson, so now we're going to go through it again, spend the next decade digging out from under the mess that could have been avoided had we remembered the generation two generations back. That's all it was, two generations lost.

So here's an example in Deuteronomy that Moses does not want a national suffering because he wants the children to learn from the parents, and by the way, the government isn't doing it here. It is the parents that assume the primary responsibility; it doesn't take a village to raise a child, it takes some parents to raise a child, mature parents. So "teach them to your children and your grandchildren," notice, two generations are involved here, in a house. Teach them to your grandchildren.

And then he wants them to concentrate on something, so now we get into the heart of the law. So let's look at what he's trying to do here. Verse 10 is an abrupt change in the text, and if you have a translation like I do, New King James, I don't know how the other translations handle this but on the front end of verse 10 you should see some italics, because it's the translator trying to make verse 10 fit with verse 9. But in the Hebrew it's very abrupt and the way it literally reads from the end of verse 9 is, "teach them to your children and your grandchildren," dash, "-the day you stood before the LORD your God. So what he's getting at there is I want you to train your children and I want you to train your grandchildren and I want you to have them remember what happened at Sinai. So there was a vivid picture in their mind.

And then he goes on in verse 10, "...the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb," now he had just said in the first 8 verses of this chapter which we studied last week, remember that was a unique event; there's no other nation ever had a Sinai; no other nation ever had gods speak from a mountain such that you could video tape it. When would that ever happen in history? It only happened once. And so he wants us to concentrate and focus on that day because that was the day, that was the event that anchors this whole book of Deuteronomy. The whole thing doesn't make any sense if there wasn't a supernatural something on Mount Sinai, such that you could hear God speaking. Can you imagine what a thing that is? Just imagine in your mind's eye, what would the voice of God sound like? Particularly when the amplitude of the voice was loud enough to be heard by well over a million people at the same time. You talk about putting the fear of God in people, I think if we were there we would be shaken. There would be something awesome in that voice; we would understand the voice, oh, it would communicate, but it would reverberate right into our hearts. So he says I want you to teach that, I want you to remember the day that you stood before the Lord in Horeb.

And now on your handout, on page 2, I've tried to show you the rough Hebrew of verse 10, "the day you stood before the face," see, in the Hebrew they are very picturesque, and so in the King James it was oh well, you stood before the Lord, and that's true, that's the meaning of it, but

the way the Hebrew language expresses it, it says "you stood before the face of Yahweh, your God, at Horeb, when Yahweh said to me," and then he quotes, "'Assemble the people and I will cause them to hear My words, [by which] they will learn to fear all the days which they will live upon the earth and their children they will be teaching." Now what's going on there. Let's follow what God is saying because he's quoting what God said, this is what God said to Moses, "Assemble the people," so there's number one thing, that was the first command, get these people here, I want them around My mountain. Then, "I will cause them to hear My words," so he's going to speak." Then there's an abrupt clause, "they will learn to fear, and I just supplied "by which," "I will cause them to hear My words," and then by hearing "My words they will learn to fear," they'll learn to respect my authority is what it means, and we're going to get into that in a moment. "...all the days which they will live upon the earth, and their children they will be teaching." So see the generational thing, it occurs right here out of God's mouth. So there must be something terribly important about the family and why the family is the anchor of a society. God recites this over and over again.

Well, we had a slide last time of the ideas of justice, I won't belabor the point but I summarized this by saying this: when we deal with the issue of justice, remember the first diagram we had, you could summarize it by a question, "who says?" Whenever you hear a concept of justice, what is right, what is wrong, a good question, not in a snotty crude way, but in a gracious fashion, needs to be asked, "who says?" It's very clear in the Bible who it is, who is saying it, but if you got out of the Bible and try to be cute and think you can go do your own thing, then who are you? And when you come to tell me that you want me to adhere to your ethic I'm going to question you on what authority do you have to tell me anything. Now what have you got? You've got a big problem. So that's perennially the issue with justice, you have to have it rooted in something, and that gets back to authority.

So if you'll follow in the handout underneath those consequences, the basic question, "who says so," authority is implicit in law. Law carries authority, and that means that the lawgiver or the source of law is the authority, or the God. The Genesis 3 debate started it, you can see it in Eden, with Eve. It was a debate between God as lawgiver and the creature as lawgiver; Satan said one thing, God said the other. Eve simply said whoa, I have a statement from God and I have a statement from Satan, let's see which one's right, but the moment she did that she had leveled both statements out as the same authority, so she's already in trouble. Instead of having the statement of God higher authority than the statement of a creature, she brought him up to equal, now we're going to do a little test, we'll eat and see whether I die or I don't, because I'm treating both statements with equal authority. And that's the fallacy of starting a point outside of the Scriptures. So the Genesis 3 debate is the debate between God or the creature as a lawgiver.

Next, a network of laws reveal, and that's where you have that blank, reveals the de-facto "religion" of a nation. Every nation has a de-facto religion, it may be an amalgamated mess, but it is a religion because it's dealing with authority. Historically paganism ultimately comes back to the people, vox populi, the voice of the people the voice of God, and Mao Tse-Tung is a great author here and watch what happens in his book, "Our

God is none other than the masses of the Chinese people." Mao Tse-Tung is absolutely right, but what happened in practice? Were the Chinese people in charge or was Mao Tst-Tung in charge? You see what happens? In other words, the strongest person takes over because there's no transcendental standard. So if you subtract the transcendental standard, then it's power to the most powerful, whoever are the elite, whoever contains the reins reigns. And that has to happen if you get out of the Scriptures and you have no transcendental standard over everyone. So that's why the authority is the glue of the culture.

Now in the interest of time I refer you to John 5:41-44 and Acts 20:21, let me just comment on those two verses. In John 5 Jesus makes a stunning statement. He says to the people of His day, He says if you accept the honor that comes from men and you do not accept the honor that comes from God you can't believe. Do you know what He's saying? If you don't accept God as an authority, you cannot believe in a Biblical fashion. Faith, ultimate, biblical faith, has a prerequisite; you've got to understand that we believe because He contains authority. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, and the Word of God is the Word OF God that carries implicit authority. And if that isn't grabbing your heart, you can't trust. That's why rebellion and autonomy, violation and independence, people fall apart, they collapse, they become impotent because they have no strength of faith because they have no authoritative source for their faith.

And in Acts 20:21 there's a very clear distinction that Paul makes when he's reporting on his missionary journey, he says here's what I taught people, I taught repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ. Two different words there, "repentance" toward God and "faith" toward Jesus. That means that all men know God, Paul didn't have to tell you have to believe in God, everybody knows God, the problem is we suppress it. The big idea with the suppression of God, first, that's the repentance, then once that authority issue is clarified, oh, then I can trust in His Son, I can trust in God's message, I can trust in God's salvation, but I can't get there if I don't first realize that God is there and He is the authority. That's Sinai or that's one of the sites, there could be another site but that's the traditional site in the Sinai peninsula.

Let's look at verse 11, look at that picture first, and then look at verse 11, because remember, this is what Moses says and God says, that parents should teach their children. "Then you came near and you stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. [12] And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sounds of words, you didn't see any form, only a voice. [13] So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. [14] And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you are now crossing over to possess."

Now imagine, this is looking, that mountain, the photograph I've taken there, I think I was pointing the camera east, so the valley that comes out from Sinai comes out like this, and it's a real wide amphitheater, that's why people think this might be the place, because there's a massive amphitheater in the mountains like this, and you have Sinai, so you could

imagine God speaking and the sound reverberating off of the walls of this canyon, and everybody is in the canyon. And what they're seeing is fire, burning to the midst of heaven, at the same time there's fire there's dark cloud. Now what it looked like nobody knows, but having chased tornadoes in my day as a graduate student, there's a nice dark beautiful cumulonimbus cloud ready to dump, and so it would be something like this, something of this magnitude that God manifests....

On your handouts if you look at what I've done there in verses 12-13, I tried again to give you the rough, rough sounding Hebrew. "The sound of words you were hearing but form you were not seeing-only sound. And He declared to you His contract which He commanded you to do-ten words-and He wrote it upon two tables of stone." So notice the emphasis in that verse is that you only heard sound, you didn't see anything, there's no ascetic side to this, there's just this awful fire, blackness, cloud hanging over with this rumbling noise of God speaking. And then He spoke the ten words. Then it says, verse 14, it says, "And the LORD commanded me at that time," that's the time generally at Sinai, "to teach you statutes and judgments." Now there's a difference here and that's something that you want to grasp about this text, about this whole event. The words that God spoke were the ten words. Apparently that's all He spoke on the mountain to the mass. Then He said Moses, come on here, now I want you to teach the statutes and the judgments, and that's the details in the book of Deuteronomy.

Now the difference is this: That those ten words form the absolute truths and principles that are part of God's essence. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. So those ten words don't change, but the statutes and the judgments are adaptations of those ten words to that nation at that time in history and being a fallen nation, this is why Jesus said, you know, in His day He said, discussing marriage and divorce, He said, From the beginning it was not so, but Moses gave you divorce for the hardness of your heart." Now that divorce passage is part of the statutes and judgments. So that means that the statutes and judgments in one sense are cultural adaptations of the ten words to the fallen society. So that'll happen, you'll see that coming out as we go through further.

Next we'll go to the principle, verse 15, "Take heed to yourselves, for you saw no form," now here's where the idolatry comes. So from verse 16 down through verse 24 we're dealing with the danger of idolatry. "Take careful heed to yourselves," he says, "for you saw no form," and remember that's why I translated that passage just above that, and I translated the rough Hebrew so you can see the emphasis in there is that they didn't see anything but they only heard something, so that's why verse 15 picks up with this, "you saw no form," [16] "lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, [17] the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air," think by the way of what you know of ancient art. Anybody see the sphinx? See, the ancient art is loaded with these; think of the picture in Egyptian art with a human body and a falcon head on the top. That's what he's talking about, I don't want you to do that; no "likeness of any winged bird," [18] "the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water [beneath the earth]," the Philistines, by the way, worshiped Dagon, he's the god of the fish. [19] "And take heed, lest you

lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all the host of them you feel driven to worship and serve them [which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage]."

So what's all this going on? Okay, we come back to our slide; we're down at the metaphysical level, we're down at the epistemological level, so we want to deal with idolatry. And on your handout I have a little principle that: Human responsibility is always honored by God, regardless of election. All of God's children do not persevere—we can fail miserably in the Christian life, go down in physical discipline, and will be ashamed at the Lord's return. If you doubt that word "ashamed" I refer you to 1 John 2:28. So the idea there is that God is pleading with the people to teach these things so you won't be a loser.

And in verse 16 He says, and notice the danger here of idolatry, it says, "Lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image," again, we do not have time to do this but I refer in your handout to Romans 1:18-23, there's the sequence of how idolatry gets started and it's important that you see that. Verse 20, of Romans 1, I put all the translation of the critical phrases there, "unseen are clearly seen...ever working power," those are the things that Paul says ALL people see, there are no people in world history who have not clearly seen evidences of God's existence. There are no atheists. An atheist is someone who has worked very hard to convince themselves that they don't believe. And they really believe that they don't believe. I'm not saying that, they can pass a lie detector test. But the point is, they are going to be held accountable and that's the way it is, that's what God says.

But now in verse 21, here's the process. They see it and they react against it. We do not have a situation that you get in sociology classes and anthropology classes, ooh, these people are trying to conceive and they're arriving at this higher level of understanding and they're making gods and goddesses. No, they already know God and they're turning from Him and making corrupt versions, they've got the starting point in the wrong place. And why, verse 21, it tells you the personal spiritual issue here, they "did not glorify Him ... nor were thankful." The idea of glorifying God is the idea of respecting Him, the idea of accepting Him as your authority. And that's offensive. If I've done something wrong and I am sensitive to my guilt, I frankly don't want to hear about God's authority, personally, if I had that attitude. So God has to deal with me to get me to the point, smack me against the side of the head, and wake me up and realize, now Clough, you're not the authority, I am, and therefore you will respect Me, because I am the authority! So want a thankful... see, thankfulness is so critical.

And then what happens in verse 21 according to Paul, then they "become 'futile' in their reasoning's," so there goes the intellectual, there is an intellectual corruption that happens because of spiritual triggers, you can see that in the way Adam and Eve flee in the garden. Think of it, five minutes after they sinned they're trying to hide; they've already changed their theology, haven't they? That they think they can hide from the God who is omnipresent? Somebody's changed attributes all of a sudden here. There's an example of the intellectual damage that sin does. The fall affects everything, including the head, not just the emotions. So

there's an intellectual perversity, and the "foolish hearts were darkened."

And verse 22, "professing themselves to be wise... they became fools." And that's true of all men, the same process can happen in believers who rebel against the authority of Scripture. They become fools. This is the whole age of enlightenment that people talk about; actually it's the age of self-deception.

Then we have verse 23, see, there's the process, 21-22, and now it's verse 23, three steps later, they "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man...." And then verse 24 is all the immoralities that follow. So there's the idea. Idolatry precedes immorality and social corruption, a reengineering of reality to avoid the implication of general revelation, which is personal responsibility. To avoid personal responsibility, man, fallen man, we all have this fallen nature that loves to do this, to get away from out guilt, to get away from submitting and bowing down before God, our Creator, we will imagine the world to be different than it really is. We love to imagine a world in which we can do whatever we darn well please and we will escape the consequences. Sorry, but that's a fantasy world, that's fantasy land. And that's why the Scriptures are hitting this idea of idolatry.

This happened, a good case in point as I point out in the notes, Genesis 10 and 11, one of the first cases of a mass of social revolution, led by Nimrod, the first kingdom, the use of the word "kingdom" in the Bible, it's not used of the Kingdom of God, the first time "kingdom" is used in the Bible it's the kingdom of man, it's Nimrod, social revolt.

Here are two great quotes, one by Jacques Ellul who's a French evangelical of a generation back; I love this quote, this summarizes, Ellul, in his French writing, captures the whole spirit of Nimrod. "The rebellious people are tired of ... being the recipient of a name. They want to name themselves It is the desire to exclude God from His creation. And it is this solidarity in a name, this unity in separation from God, which was to keep man from ever again being separated on earth.... It was in this, man's environment, built by man for man, with any other intervention or power excluded, that man could make a name for himself...." [The Meaning of the City (1970), pp 15-16] Excellent statement, that's the summary, and if you want a picture think of Nimrod and think of the kingdom. We will build a name for ourselves, we will define our meaning.

And now the next quote also goes to the dynamic that we are studying, Rushdoony in his book The One and the Many, "Whenever a society has a naturalistic religion," and what does he mean by naturalistic religion? He means a religion rooted in nature, paganism in the ancient world is a religion rooted in nature, everything comes out of nature. What do we have today in Neo-Darwinism? Is everything coming out of nature? Yeah, you see, what we have today is just a modern version of ancient paganism. In both modern paganism and ancient paganism, both of those see the same thing ultimately, that man has come out of nature. We even capitalize "Mother Nature," don't we, in writings? "Mother Nature!" So you see, our paganism isn't so far removed, it's just that we have a scientific vocabulary in twenty syllable words and differential equations to express it, but it's still paganism.

Now watch, remember what I said in this diagram? You change the metaphysic you are going to change your ethics, you change your ethics you're going to change your politics, and that's what Rushdoony is getting at in this quote. Follow me please: "Whenever a society has a naturalistic religion, grounded on the concept of continuity," that is, man, nature, sort of like the lady that ran PETA for a while said a pig is a dog is a cat is a man, with the idea of continuity, there's no difference. "...grounded on the concept of continuity, man faces," watch this, "faces the total power of the state.... Where there is no transcendental law and power in a separate and omnipotent being, then power has a wholly immanent and immediate source in a state, group, or person, and it is beyond appeal. The state becomes the saving power and source of law; it becomes the priestly agency of its own total power.... [It] becomes god walking on earth, and its every tyranny is identified as liberty.... In this faith, for man to be free means to be in the state."

That's actually the theology of Egypt, and you can see the theology of Egypt, slaves in one sense hate liberty. Now you'd think that slaves would love to be free, but freedom is scary because all of a sudden in freedom you're responsible for you, no one else is. There is a subtlety of slavery where my master takes care of me, he gives me the handouts, he provides for me. And you can see the struggle if you read carefully the Old Testament in the book of Numbers. Why was it that every time the people had a problem in the wilderness and had to choose between freedom and trusting God to provide in their freedom or wanting to go back to Egypt, where they were worked cruelly, BUT, Egypt provided food, Egypt made decisions for them, Egypt then told them what business they could go into and who their customers would be; Egypt dominated their life and in one sense that was security. To leave that security and go out into a desert trusting only in God is scary. So don't think of redemption as necessarily easy and straightforward, because there is that slavitude, that slavery has a certain perverse comfort to it. And that's what Rushdoony is getting at here.

Okay, let's continue and we'll go next to the principle that idolatry precedes immorality because it breaks down the authority of God's revelation by making man his own authority. Man no longer is motivated and empowered to subdue his fallen flesh and resist the principalities and powers. I urge you, again in the interest of time I cannot go through this, but Isaiah 41 is a famous passage in the Old Testament, it's a sarcastic attack by Isaiah against the idolaters of his time, particularly against the craftsmen that were doing it. He's facing the case where... he's dealing with the case where a Persian King Cyrus is going to come and God is raising up this Persian king to conquer and eventually to bring the Jews back, but he is scaring all the nations, and Isaiah says who can do this, who is doing this, and he said the only one who is calling the shots in this historical chaotic moment of history is the Lord of Israel.

And then he says every neighbor, Isaiah 41:6, every neighbor, every brother, says to each other, be of good courage, be of good course, let's try positive thinking and maybe we can do away with Cyrus, with positive thinking. And so we will make gods and goddesses. And then in one tremendous sarcastic, one of the famous passages in the Old Testament, Isaiah 41:7, and the craftsmen build their idols and they hold them up

with chains to they won't tip over. This is a classic statement of idolatry and you can just see the sarcasm of Isaiah and you people you worship something, you have to chain it so it won't fall over, and then you won't trust the God of Israel that moves mountains and moves nations.

Back to Deuteronomy and we'll finish this section. Verse 19, verse 19 has a problem. And people have puzzled over this problem, notice what it says: "Take heed, lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all people under the whole heaven as a heritage. [20] But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace..." and so on.

Now what's going on here. Well, quickly let's think of this. When Satan tempted Christ, what did he offer Christ if Christ would bow and accept his authority? The kingdoms of the world. Jesus didn't say He didn't have them; that was a real temptation, and it can only be a real temptation if Satan really does have all the nations of the world. That's what's going on here, there's some mystical connection between the principalities and powers and the cosmos. The stars, the word "stars" in the Hebrew is used both for the stars we can see and the principalities and powers; now what that is we don't exactly know, whether they actually inhabit the myriad of the cosmos and we look out and see the millions of stars and galaxies and maybe what we're looking at is physical locations of principalities and powers, there may be that many in the cosmos. So it's something to think about. But what God is saying here in verse 19 is all the nations in the earth basically are fallen and under these powers and principalities.

[20] "But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day." So there's the difference: Israel is unique. And then he concludes, [21] "...the LORD was angry," now look at this, after he gets through the uniqueness of Israel, that Israel is the only nation that has a distinct relationship with God whereas all other nations, including our own, are somehow under the principalities and powers, see, people don't take that seriously. That's why we have postmillennialists running around that think that by preaching the gospel they're going to eventually bring in the Kingdom. No, by preaching the gospel what you do is you create the body of Christ that authorizes Jesus to break the seals and the scroll to the earth in Revelation 5. There's progress going on but not the kind that you're thinking about.

Now in verses 21 and 22 we have an interesting parenthesis. When have we seen this one before? "Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I would not cross over the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. [22] But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but you can cross over and you can possess the good land." Why do you suppose Moses stuck that in there at that point? He's just got through saying that Israel has this unique feature to it, in all of history, no nation has ever been pulled out from under the principalities and powers as Israel has, but there's a warning, and the warning is that consequences follow the choices. He says don't you ever forget that your leader, your George Washington, as it were, of Israel, that your leader

made a bad decision, disobeyed what the Lord told him to do, and the Lord held him accountable. So while it's good to rejoice in our position, we also have to remember our responsibility to follow the Word of God.

Verse 23-24, the last verses, "Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God," see, this is the conclusion, in order to get to the conclusion he puts verse 21 and 22 in there as a parenthesis, "Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. [24] For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, and a jealous God." And if you don't believe it, Moses says, look at me.

Okay, conclusion: Israel has a unique relationship with God-different from all other nations [by virtue of its purpose in history and the testimonial features of the Sinaitic Contract]. This uniqueness is cosmic, reaching into the heavenly realm of the principalities and powers. AT no point, does God alleviate personal responsibility of the consequences of choices made. And the events in Israel's history are never to be forgotten revelations of God's character.