

Clough Deuteronomy Session 34

Deuteronomy 14:22-29; Israel's Distinctive Theocentric Faith in God's Economic Order-Part 1

Fellowship Chapel; 2 November 10

Tonight we're on session 34 and we're continuing in chapter 14. Chapter 14 is a chapter, as you can see how it's unfolding, is showing the cultural implications of the Ten Commandments. And what we need to understand here, with this culture, because I don't want you to lose the forest for the trees and when you first get in the Bible, if you're new to the Bible, if you're new to this section of the Old Testament you can get lost in the details. So rather than getting lost in the details let me keep reviewing the big idea. The big idea in chapters 12, 13, 14, 15, all the way on to this exhortation in chapter 26 is Moses is showing what the Ten Commandments look like in the details of life, the details of society.

And so this brings us to a point that has application for our Christian life and it's a matter of impact on culture; faith and religion always have cultural implications. We don't have to go outside the Middle East to see a cultural implication, the way people live, the way they structure their lives, the way they structure their homes, the way they act in public, all a result of religious faith. So it isn't too hard to think that when God set up His nation, His special nation Israel, that He would want them to have a certain flavored culture because that nation was to be a witness, worldwide witness to all the other nations and it's nice to have the Ten Commandments and the first part, remember, if you follow your outline, chapters 5-11, loving Yahweh with all your heart, that's mental attitude, that's what's going on on the inside. And that's necessary, and that's the prerequisite for anything going on on the outside. The problem is that outside observers only see what's visible on the outside; they can't read hearts, they can only read behavior. So this is why God spells out the behavior that He wants in that culture, this special culture. And because it's His special culture we have to think about it doesn't always apply to the Church, it's a culture reserved for that special nation Israel. And I'll try to indicate as we go on in these details what parts flip over to the church age, we have one of them coming up tonight.

I want to give you about six examples of things that I personally have run into in teaching the Word of God where, when I teach the Word of God, or other men, women share the Word, it creates vibrations in people. I want to give you six examples of why, when you try to spell out the cultural implications of the Bible, sometimes this really rubs believers the wrong way, because all these six examples I'm going to give you I've run into within church congregations, evangelical congregations.

The first one, the example of a biologist. When I was teaching Genesis 1 and we got onto the kinds, that God created things after their kinds, that these kinds are boundaries where you have variation, you have a dog, all the different dogs came from a basic dog kind, but dogs don't change into cats. Dogs stay as dogs. Well, this cuts right across the Neo-Darwinian philosophy that drives the entire biological profession. So if you have a biologist who trusted the Lord and he's reading the Bible, he's still got the culture of his profession in his heart. So this creates vibrations and so there's always that tension, oh, isn't there a way that somehow I

can be a biologist, go along with the culture of my profession, and not cut across it as a believer; it creates tension.

A second example is a historical geologist who sees the constraints of the age of the earth in the Bible, straightforwardly interpreted, and says wait a minute, this cuts across the culture and behavior of my profession and that creates deep unease, deep tension because it sets him against all his peers, all of the professional peers.

Another example would be a mathematician who, when he is confronted with the fact that in the Bible God is three in one, that mathematical distinctions are embedded in the very Godhead, so that math doesn't become an arbitrary creation of mathematicians mind's and theorems, but rather the reason why our minds, when they express mathematics, do it the way they do is because God Himself is a mathematician, and He created the universe with mathematical structures.

A fourth example, I've run into this just this year, twice, where we have people in the evangelical congregation who basically are Marxist socialist, and when I begin to speak about the free market and biblical economics like we are last Tuesday and this Tuesday they get vibrations because this goes against what they've picked up in the culture. So what I'm showing you is that when you think seriously about following the Lord, going to His Word as an authority in every single area, you inevitably run into conflicts because this is the cosmos, this is the world system.

A fifth example is a lawyer who sees that the Bible is a contractual document that has to be literally interpreted, and that it's speaking of the fact that law is not that which man produces by himself, rather, it ought to be an expression of the holiness of God known in our God-consciousness and in biblical revelation.

And finally, the sixth example is a theologian, of all things, who basically doubts the authority of Scripture. And then when we show that the Bible is claiming inerrancy this creates vibrations. So I give you that just out of my personal experience; I don't know all the answers about historical geology and biology, I just know that the Word of God is God's Word and therefore I have to follow it, and hopefully someday some answers will reconcile to it.

All right, review, chapter 14:1, chapter 14:21, remember the sandwich idea, at the beginning and the end of that section in chapter 14 we deal with how death is dealt with. And in that situation that's important; a culture marks itself by how it handles death, and you'll see, in 14:1-2, in the pagans, in order to express sorrow they would literally cut themselves; it's almost like the cutting that goes on today. And so we want to again review a point here because this diagram that I keep showing over and over, this needs to be almost at a knee-jerk level, so that when you encounter suffering, or you encounter evil, or you encounter people who object to the Bible, how can you believe in the Bible when God lets babies die, or when God lets this happen and so forth, what you have to remember is that on an unbelieving basis, and this is a thing that we need to train ourselves, because I've been caught on this myself many times, where somebody will challenge you with a question and you'll immediately start trying to answer the question from Scripture, which you ultimately want to do, but before you do that sometimes it's wise to ask them a

question. It's like a tennis match, with the ball going across the net, so they hit the ball in your net so it helps sometimes to bang the ball in their net and ask some questions.

The point is that if they reject and make fun of the Scriptures they themselves have no other recourse than this, namely that good and evil coexist forever and ever and ever and ever. And that means that you can't escape evil. And if that's the case, you have a very hopeless situation in life. And it's precisely that that I believe has led to the fact that the second leading cause of death among teenagers today is suicide because they grasp this, they understand that if this is all there is who wants to go on living in this, you have suffering and sorrow and heartache. This is the story of paganism outside of the Bible, and people can laugh at the Bible but the Bible is the only that brackets evil; evil started with the fall and it will end with a judgment, when God permanently separates good and evil. No one, no religion, no other philosophy on earth can bracket evil. So people can make their snide remarks about the Word of God but the fact of the matter is that the Word of God is the only answer that you have to evil. God is good, He's never compromised His goodness, His holiness, He is immutable, go back to the divine attributes, they've always been the same, always will be the same, and evil is not one of them.

So we have this big picture to start with and then we said that there are strategies, sub strategies in the Bible to think about. Now unless we have a crystal ball and a hotline to God we're not going to know which of these sub strategies is immediately involved in our personal heartache or personal suffering. We won't know that but at least it helps to be able to rehearse in your mind the fact that there are many, many different things going on that can be going on in the middle of your trial and your tribulation. And we've divided them into direct suffering and the indirect suffering; the direct suffering is when I'm in a situation of suffering and it's due to my fault, my choices. And one of the labels you can use from the Bible is choice and consequences; that's the story of God, choice and consequences, and He gives us the freedom of choice but we don't have the freedom to choose the consequences of our choices; He sets those up. So these are the ones where we get ourselves into a mess.

The indirect suffering, this diagram was on session 33 last week so you have this diagram on those notes so we won't go through all of them tonight, just to review though, that these, and probably there's more of them, these are just the ones I've found in Scripture but these are specific things to think about that God can be doing in your life in the middle of these kind of trials. And that's a valid reason why in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 14, basically Moses says these practices, these pagan practices, are not for you because you've got tools to handle this, pagans do not. So that's why he says God "has chosen you," verse 2, "to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples [who are on the face of the earth]." So we should act like that and not act like pagans. And this truth carries over into the New Testament because every time you go to a funeral you see this, when the pastor will quote something about "sorrow not as others who have no hope," that's what he's talking about in that passage.

Then we said in verses 2-21, the first part of verse 21, it's all diet, diet, diet, clean food, unclean food, clean, unclean, clean, unclean, and there we deal with diet. And so we have the second element of the culture; every culture has a diet. We think of Mexican food, we think of Italian food, it's different, Greek food. We know coming from different cultures there's certain diets that go with the culture and so here God wanted His people to have a diet. And so the diet, remember, from eating pagan style food in Egypt to the forty years in the wilderness when they ate manna, which was God's supply, then the diet changed again once they went into the land and they began to eat the fruit of the land, the vegetables and the cattle and so on, then they had the produce of their nation and the manna stopped.

So it's almost like God had three diets; He had the pre salvation diet, the trial and tribulation diet, and then finally the diet of the Kingdom. So that's something to think about. And I quote, I think I have it on your handout, a quote from a book in the Apocrypha called Tobit, and it says, this guy is writing... again, the Apocrypha is not part of the inspired Scripture, but what the Apocrypha does give us, it gives us a glimpse into how people thought who were writing at the time the Scriptures were being written. So oftentimes we use the Apocrypha to do word studies, for example. Well, here's Tobit 1:10, "When I was carried away to Nineveh, all my brethren and relatives ate the food of the Gentiles, but I kept myself from eating it, because I remembered God with all my heart." So there's an example of a Jew writing and you can see diet played a role in his life.

Then we discussed the fact that there was economic wisdom in these things; the clean meat supply would be in abundance, and the unclean not, and so the clean meat supply in abundance would mean lower prices. And the fact of the matter is that unclean meat could only be produced by the ger, or the resident aliens, or we would call them naturalized citizens who are Gentile, could join the nation, they could raise unclean food. But the problem was they couldn't hold title to the pasturage, because the pasturage was entitled to Jewish people and at the end of the 49 years, 50th year in Jubilee, the pasture reverted back to ownership of the Jewish family. So these guys could produce unclean food but it really wasn't too efficient for them to do so. And then we said that the defiled meat, remember, it could be sold to the nokree, that is the traveling businessman, so that was an export.

So now let's think about the economic implications here. The first one is the way God set these rules up, and I am showing you this because too often we read quickly these texts and we don't think through the implications, but look at how well designed these dietary regulations are. They are set up in such a way that it lowers the prices of the clean meat and raises the prices of the unclean meat and then gives cash flow from exporting the defiled meat to the Gentiles. That's all embedded in this dietary flow. So you see that there's an economic wisdom in these things and you don't normally think of that when you think of the clean and the unclean.

Tonight we're going to start down in the tithing area. So if you go to Deuteronomy 14:22 we'll get into the tithe. "You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. [23] And

you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of you herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. [24] "But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, [when the Lord your God has blessed you,] [25] then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses. [26] And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. [27] You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, [for he has no part nor inheritance with you." Then in verse 28, "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. [29] And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do."

This section of Scripture, besides being used for fund raising, somewhat illegitimately by Christian pastors, also is one that I have to comment on because it's now being used by the Christian socialists to argue, particularly verses 28-30, that section, that end section, that tithe there, they claim that that is a precedent for socialism. And so we're going to have to answer that. So let's go back on the outline to "Tithing Overview" and as I say, besides death and diet, money is also part of a culture and how people handle money. So that's why, how wealth is handled by Israel now becomes an expression of religious faith, that the loving the Lord with all your heart carried over into loving the Lord with your nephesh or the details of life or your soul and that meant that there would be certain ways you would handle money.

So let's look at that. Israel had three tithes. The first one isn't mentioned in this context but we'll show you where it is, and always based on production. There was no sales tax, there were no property taxes, it was all what we could call sort of an income tax, and I'll show you why that's so in a moment. But the reason, it's related to the fact that production of wealth is an exercise of dominion. It goes back to Genesis 1, an exercise of dominion; God has created us with our God-consciousness so whether it's manual labor, the skill of a brick-layer, the skill of an auto mechanic, the skill of a computer programmer, whatever the skills are, those skills are all forms of dominion. And those are the skills that God has given and God wants us to develop those skills, combined with our creativity, so that we can be productive people.

But what if, looking at it from a farmer's point of view, in Genesis 2 God shows Adam one way to have dominion. What did God do in Genesis 2? Remember? Before He even created Adam on the sixth day, He did what? He planted a garden. Now that garden, it says, was "in Eden." That means the whole world was not a garden; the garden was only within Eden; everything outside was wilderness. So when God created Adam He created Adam in the garden, He basically is saying to Adam, look, this is what you can do to the wilderness, go out and conquer the wilderness; it doesn't mean rape the land, it means take care of it, but you take care of the

land by bringing it to full production. This cuts across the modern ecology thing because they argue that it's man that defiles the environment and so forth and so on, and anytime man touches it he defiles it. That's not true. Men have defiled nature but they don't have to. The matter of the fact is that it's cultivation that brings the land into production. So visualize agriculture, visualize Genesis 2 for an easy to grasp picture of what dominion is, and then you can, from there, think about any other thing, any skills that you see, workmen. The Bible is very pro labor, it's the pagans that always are lazy, it's the pagans that say it's demeaning for you to be a laborer, and we keep saying wait a minute, God labors in the first chapter of Genesis. So God is pictured as a laborer. There's something in dignity, it's not something to be ashamed of, it's something to be proud of that we are laborers and we produce things.

So the idea, then, is that the tithes were taken from what was produced. The problem with a sales tax or a property tax as we know it in our modern cultures is the fact that when you tax property you're not taxing production, you're taxing an asset and if you keep taxing assets what do you suppose is going to happen to the assets? They're going to go down. For example, in your notes, a point that I make again and again, "Government cannot produce wealth," government can only consume it or re-distribute it but it cannot create wealth. The government isn't there to have dominion. And one of the fallacies that we hear again and again today and the first lady did this about four weeks ago, she gave a talk in which she used the illustration of a pie and it's very persuasive when people don't think about it; she takes the idea of a pie and she says look, there are some people that get a little sliver of the pie and for them to have a bigger piece of the pie what has to happen to the other slices? They get smaller. In other words, the slices are being redistributed in their size; right? If you take a small pie, you take a bigger piece, then the other pieces, some of them, have to take up the slack. Here's the fallacy in the illustration. Bake another pie. You see, with dominion we're not limited to one pie.

An example of it is energy costs. Three hundred years ago people were burning whale oil in their lamps. Now if the population in the United States had grown like it is, where would there be enough whales to get whale oil to have all the lamps going. So what happened? Did we run out of resources, we're walking around in darkness now, no light? No, we innovated, it's called creativity. The answer to the fact that we are going to run out of resources is the fact that every mouth comes equipped with a brain in God's creation and that means creativity. So we've created new sources of energy. So we go on, we have dominion, we fill the earth, we are carrying out dominion and that's creativity. God has given this to us. So it's not a zero sum game, that's the fallacy in the socialist's argument, that it's just a zero sum game if you're wealthy you... you know, that means that somebody else is suffering because you're wealthy. That's not true, if somebody is wealthy, and they didn't get it by cheating or something like that, they got it by genuine labor, just because they're productive. We're supposed to feel guilty because we're Americans and our country is so much wealthier than other countries. Well, that's because we're more productive than other countries. People work harder here. In Europe they're worrying about a four day work week and they can't produce. Well, of course they can't produce because you're

supposed to work five or six days, and we do in our country. So the point we're saying is that it's a fallacious argument to talk about the zero sum game, economics is not biblically a zero sum game.

Finally, to tax property, whether or productive or not punishes ownership by the disabled. Think, for example, of the widows. You see this in farm areas, in the rural areas; a couple owns land, the father dies, the husband dies, now his wife is left as a widow. But she's unable to farm the land, take care of the land like when her husband was there, so unless she remarries, unless she hires, unless her children take over the farm, what does she do with the property? Well, the property keeps getting taxed so where's she supposed to get the cash flow to pay the taxes on the property? She winds up selling the property. So that's what we're talking about, taxing a capital asset is a de-capitalizing tax. And that's why God in the Scripture doesn't tax property; He's not taxing the inheritance of the Jews and that's nowhere in Scripture. The taxes are on the production of the economy.

Okay, now Deuteronomy 8, we have to back to Deuteronomy 8:3 to pick up a principle that expressed culturally in the time. So if you turn back to chapter 8, you remember that back there we had a test. You remember when we went through chapter 8, many lessons ago, that God in chapter 8 was giving people the heart attitude toward financial dependency upon Him. And so it's warning us. Remember, He says that, in verse 11, remember He said, "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments.... [12] lest-when you have eaten and when you are full and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them," see there's prosperity, economic prosperity, "... and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, [13] when your heart is lifted up and you forget that the LORD your God brought you out of the land of Egypt, [from the house of bondage], [15] who led you through the great and terrible wilderness,," and so on, "where there was no water," He "brought water for you out of the flinty rock; [16] who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know," and so forth and so on.

Verse 17, "then you say in your heart, 'my power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'" So that's the individual workaholic attitude that it's my personal efforts that have created my wealth and it's my personal efforts and this is the fruit of my personal labor, now I'm sorry, I'm not giving it and I'm not sharing it with anybody else, it's mine. See what happens with this attitude? The attitude is built on a fallacious assumption that your wealth, your economic gain, your profit, is due solely to you, and God had a little demo to the folks to show the fallacy of that argument by leading them in the wilderness. So in the wilderness they couldn't produce anything, so He had to supply the water, He had to supply the clothes that wouldn't wear out, He had to supply the food, the manna, so what was He showing people. He was showing, look, ultimately I am the one who gives you the logistical grace. God didn't have to do this, this is part of His wonderful grace.

So He provided logistical grace and He made people understand that and that's the source of Deuteronomy 8:3; that's the slogan and that's the one Jesus used when Satan tempted Him. And he said, verse 3, "So He humbled you, He allowed you to hunger, He fed you with manna that you did not know, your fathers did not know, that," purpose clause, "that He might

make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD." The point there was that when you had bread you made the bread, you took the yeast, you did it, you baked it and that's your bread, that's your product. But God says you don't live by bread alone, meaning you don't do it by your baking, your flour, your cooking and that was it that did that. I am the One, God says, I am behind those processes. Normally we don't see that. So in the forty year test period what God did, He stripped away the normal way of feeding, the normal way of clothing, stripped all of the cause/effect away so people could glimpse what He provides. And that's what He wanted people to remember, that's why He says don't forget the wilderness, that was your trial of adversity, your wilderness adversity test, "man does not live by bread alone," and that leads, in the outline here, Deuteronomy 8:3, you must remember the Creator/creature distinction and its expression in providence.

And I give a reference here for James 4:13-16 which we covered back then; remember, that's the verse that addressed the Jewish businessman, and James says... and think about this, you know, who was the half-brother of James? Jesus. Now James knew about business. How do you suppose he knew about business? What did his dad do? He ran a carpenter shop. So James was well aware of business and it's interesting, in James 4:13 he's talking to believers who are business people and he says look, I know you have a business plan, I know you have a business model, but please, when you do your business model don't make it airtight from God. And he says you guys, you've got your business plan, you're going to go to Corinth, you're going to go to Rome, you're going to go to Thessalonica, whatever the cities are, and you're going to stay there, that's your plan because you're going to sell the goods, make a profit on your goods and so forth, and move on to another city. So he's addressing a traveling businessman and he says yes, you've got your business plan but you need to allow God to detail that. And remember that you can go to Corinth next week and sell Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, if... IF the Lord wills. See, you always have to condition the plan on that conditionality factor. So that's what it means to remember the Creator/creature distinction.

So tithing, conclusion and overview here, tithing was what creature-hood dependency looked like in the financial part of life, because of what is going to happen. So because we will not cover the first tithe I've given you Leviticus 27, Numbers 18, just for reference. And we'll just spin through that and on the outline, it's for the Levites. That first tithe was given completely to the Levites and the reason for it is not that this was the state supporting the Church, so let me take you through the line of reasoning here. The Levites were the priests. What did the Levites do? They had many functions, but at Jerusalem what did the Levites do? They conducted the rituals and they took care of the facilities, so they were involved in the activities and they were also involved in maintaining the facilities and so forth and so on. So the "Levites waited on the King," not the human king but on Yahweh.

The Levites, however, did not receive an inheritance. In the Bible every tribe received an inheritance except Levi. So here Levi is without an inheritance. Now what do you suppose economically the inheritance is all about? It was your starting capital, you can't start a business without capital. Some people have to borrow the loan to get business started



because you need capital to start the business. Now what God did in His grace, He brought these people out; remember they had been slaves in Egypt, remember, four generations, slaves in Egypt and they weren't paid for all the pyramids. What happened when the Exodus happened, economically? The Egyptians gave them silver, gold, jewels and everything else. Guess what? They got their slave labor wages paid. So now they're walking through the desert, they've got their silver and their gold paid for from all the slave labor of the previous generations. Now they go into the land; now in addition to the silver and the gold that they got from Egypt God says okay, you guys, in the tribe of Benjamin, here's your land, it's all yours, you can farm it, do whatever, you can do nothing with it, but it's your land, it's your capital; if you want to subdue get a herd and let them graze or turn it into an orchard, do something with the land. Except Levi, Levi wasn't given any capital.

So therefore, what this first tithe is about is that Levi had a claim to the produce of all the land. That's why ten percent of the produce went to Levi. This is not a welfare check. You can't use this to justify socialism. This is not the state supporting the church; this is a legal title or said another way, you know you have title to your home, you have title to your land, you have a title search and so forth, when you buy the house and buy the land, and everybody wants to make sure you have clear title; this is a title question, and the title here is that they don't have any land so they have title to the produce of other people's titled land. This is a legal issue, this is not a welfare issue, this is not the state supporting the Church, as people argue. That's why I'm going through these arguments because sooner or later somebody is going dump on you these arguments, because I've had them dumped on me. Just understand the defense, this is not the state supporting the Church, this is a title guarantee.

Okay, therefore, the first tithe, going down in the outline, the first tithe is a civil law; it is a title protection law; it is not a socialist redistribution of wealth. We don't have what penalties were applied for violating this. It probably was disinheritance, we don't know, we don't have information here in the text, but obviously there would be a punishment for not coming up with the ten percent.

Then there's a little clause in Leviticus 27:31 which again, you can go there later, but let's suppose you have a herd and you take the first one of your herd, ten percent, and you know, golly, it's one of those animals that's your pet, and you just don't want to take it to Jerusalem and have it killed so you've got an affection to that pet. Well, there's a little provision in the law for that. You can redeem it; the problem is to redeem it there's a 20% surcharge. So in Leviticus 27:31 you have to add a fifth to it so you can... you have to pay for that, but again, there's an economic pressure not to abuse this because if you keep withholding stuff on your you'll end up paying 20%. So again, this is a little tiny detail here in the Law but I want you to see, there's a divine mind behind these little, what look like little picayune regulations, but they create economic back pressures to enforce what God wants to happen.

Now we come to the second tithe which is the subject beginning in Deuteronomy 14:22. This tithe is not going exclusively to Levites, this is a strange, very strange kind of tithe, because if you think about money

and you think about, you know, the Bible usually teaches about being frugal and saving and not being profligate with your money, it talks about saving, you know, you don't spend it all today because tomorrow is coming, so you have that idea. Well now, what is going on here? Look at verse 22, ["You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year."] this is apparently an agriculturally limited tithe; people in the town apparently didn't go with the second tithe. This tithe was on the countryside.

So you have all these things and it says, [23] "And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide," now look what happens here? We'll skip about the money here, down to verse 26, "And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine," this is somebody who didn't bring their own, "[or similar drink,] for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household." Now that second tithe is an interesting example of holy wastefulness. Now this is really strange and it's kind of hard to get your mind around at first. Here they go, they take ten percent of the rural produce, they bring it to Jerusalem, and then they have a blast, and God says rejoice, whatever you want. And apparently this is the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall at the end of the agricultural season, and God says be happy, rejoice, have a ball. But, he's got some restrictions, the first one is you can't eat it in the town that you've come from. That's Deuteronomy 12, remember, you have to bring it to Jerusalem because God wants this to be Theocentric; He doesn't want people to just have a party time. This is more serious than that.

The best analogy that we have as Americans as to what's going on here in this second tithe is Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving the way it was originally intended in our country, of coming together and enjoying one another and being thankful. It always amuses me when people talk about Thanksgiving in the secular world, and I want to say thanksgiving to whom? I mean, thanksgiving means addressed to something, what are you thanking, who are you thanking for this? And that's the unanswered question. But we as Christians who we're thankful for. So this second tithe was an amazing example of ten percent of a person's annual produce in the rural countryside, which was probably thousands of dollars in our money, and they would go to Jerusalem and blow it.

Now let's get our head into this. Why would they do this? What's the story behind this? Why does God want them to do it. There are two little words here, if you look at verse 22, "You shall truly tithe" of your grain, "all the increase of your grain" in the field, and then it says in verse 23, and you'll eat it. And then it talks about all the different grain, the new wine, okay, let's look at those words for a moment.

Let's go back to the slide that we saw earlier; remember Baal, remember, this is the pagan view. Now we see these statutes and we think gosh, how can people be so stupid as to worship these little things. The reason is that those statues represent the forces of nature. It was an agricultural economy. So why do you suppose this was a temptation in an agricultural economy? Because they were worshiping nature. I mean, after all, a farmer, you talk about investing with high risk, a farmer is going out there and putting all his money in one or two crops. It's like buying one

or two stocks and if they crash you've lost everything. So farming is a very high risk, both in the zoological and botanical areas. So it's high risk, this isn't just a little Sunday School thing here that we're talking about; we're talking about business in an agricultural economy. And they're afraid that they're going to have a bad year, so they're going to cover all the bases; they may worship a little Yahweh over here, and a little Baal over here, and something else over here.

And there were two gods that have same name as the words here in verse 22 and 23; one is "grain," the word is dagon, and dagon was a deity where they had deified the god of grain. And you read Samson, remember Dagon, what happened? He was in the temple of Dagon. Why were the Philistines worshipping Dagon? Because he was the grain god and he was concerned, they were raising crops. And there was another god, wine, the word for "wine" is terosh, and terosh was a name of another deity, another pagan deity. So when God says I want you to bring your wine, I want you to bring your grain and come and worship in My presence, what was He doing spiritually? What were the forces involved in this whole second tithe thing? First of all, if I'm going there and I'm taking ten percent of my yearly produce and I'm blowing it, and I'm thinking to myself, gee, you know, I've got to save some money for next year, what did that force me to do, that little procedure. I have to sit there and rejoice and blow ten percent of my annual salary in God's presence.

What is He training me to do? He's training me to trust Him, which gets back to the fact of a simple thing that we've gone over and over, the faith-rest drill. It was setting up a situation where the economic pressures would confront every person, every person coming off the farm here, with the fact that man, what am I going to do for next year? So the procedure that this procedure would have mentally caused them to think about is going through that faith-rest drill. And the first thing you remember about the faith-rest drill is you've got to start with some fragment of Scripture, some event picture from the Bible, some doctrine from the Scriptures, you've got to get your brain hooked on something, you can't wallow around on emotion. So you have to anchor it on a hunk of Scripture, a hunk of truth. It may be an attribute of God, it may be a verse that you've memorized, it may be just a picture of God speaking on Mount Sinai or Jesus walking on the water, but some fragment of truth from the Scripture. So you've got to latch onto that, and that's why you can't have everything just in notes, it's got to be up here in your heart, the Word of God.

And then the hard step is number two because that's where you have to cycle that truth, and I always think of it, personally, as a sponge, with a lot of water in it and I'm squeezing that sponge, I'm taking a verse of Scripture, I'm taking, for example, "God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." That's His omnipotence. So if I'm in a situation and I'm tired and I'm worn out, and I think to myself, wait a minute, God is never tired-isn't that a corollary to omnipotence? So what this process does, it starts to calm things down when you're upset, to calm down and get grounded in the Word of God and start thinking. And then what you do is you take this problem and you're covering it, you're encircling the problem with truth. And you're squeezing the sponge to get enough truth out so that now you dominate the problem, the problem doesn't dominate you.

So this is the mental process these guys were going through and then finally, if you're successful in this, and sometimes you have to cycle through it and cycle through it and cycle through it until you get it, then you go to three, experience the peace of God that goes beyond human comprehension. You know that passage in Philippians 4:6-7, the "peace of God that passes all understanding." Did you ever think about what that last clause means, pass, "surpasses all understanding." It means you can't figure it out. It means that, in this case you're a farmer, you've gone there, you've blown ten percent of your annual income, you're thinking yeah, what am I going to do next year. But somehow you go through the process, you're stable, you have a sense of peace and you don't understand how you can sit there and have a sense of peace when you're still worried about next year. But you do. So the second tithe has a dynamic to it, but it's an extravaganza, that's the thing you want to see about, it's an extravaganza.

Look at verse 26, another thing that shows you the heart of God here. He says, "whatever your heart desires; you shall eat," He doesn't tell them what to eat, there's no detail here because everybody is different. He allows you the freedom to enjoy Him your way, without bullying, without peer pressure, letting you relax in His presence, and enjoying His presence, and enjoying His logistical grace, recognizing that every one is different. We can't copy one another in these things, there's room for personal diversity here... "whatever your heart desires."

So, that's the background, then, of this tithe. And then he adds verse 27, "[You shall not forsake] the Levite who is within your gates...." Now the cultural impact of this. This was an annual orientation to two things. It was an orientation to business and an orientation to finances. Every single year these guys coming from the countryside had to go through this process. The means of prosperity is ultimately the Lord, not clever human planning by some Marxist socialist elite, not some individual work-alcoholism, now that little phrase, "rejoice in the Lord," as you're blowing ten percent, think of 2 Corinthians 9:7. Doesn't this recapitulate the same mental attitude? What does it say? "So let each one of you give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful," or willing "giver." It's the same attitude recapitulated in the New Testament. And that means not under pressure, not grudgingly or of necessity because it doesn't come from the heart; true giving comes from the heart in a relaxed way.

Now the economic impact, and again I'm borrowing from Gary Norton and I might add something else here. There's a book written in 1006 called Who Really Cares, and we don't really need to go into the details but let me just summarize in one sentence, and you remember this next time you hear some of these welfarists, religious conservatives give more to charity than liberals. The book is a documentation and it's by an author called Arthur Brooks, and the title of the book is Who Really Cares, it was published in 2006, and he goes through and he documents the fact that the people who are giving in our society is not the left-wing; the liberals are liberal with other people's money, but not with their own. It is the conservatives that have been giving, giving, giving, they're the ones who in Bellaire are supporting birth rights. It's not getting any money from the government, the gals that are in trouble come and there's some godly

Christian women working with them, that whole house down there in Bellaire is supported by personal gifts. There's a social example. And I dare say that it's far more efficient that some free triple-tiered bureaucracy trying to do the same thing. Okay.

Economic impact has just as the food, and I list some of them here. Notice verse 25 because verse 25 gets into the economics of what's going on here. If you lived too far away from Jerusalem, by the way, we're going to go five or ten minutes over our normal time, we'll cut the Q & A tonight but we got started late; I'm sorry but if you don't mind, just so we have a total hour. Here in verse 25 we have an example of people who were too far away. Obviously, I mean, if you have ten percent of your herd you'd be driving them all the way down to Jerusalem, so God recognizes that and He says okay, cool it, just sell it in your town and take the money and bring the money to Jerusalem and buy the cattle that you need there.

But now this has an economic impact. The first thing it would do is it makes the commodity prices cheaper in the distant cities because everybody is turning the commodities into money, so you've got a supply of commodity that's needing cash, silver and gold, so your commodity prices are dropping. But then in Jerusalem people are coming with their money, buying the commodity, so what's happening to the price in Jerusalem? It's rising. Now that's interesting; if you were a businessman and you observed this, that the prices here are cheap and the prices there are expensive, what kind of business would you get into? The transportation business, exactly. So this very process in verse 25 creates business. So here we have job creation, just to make the second tithe work.

Another thing, this also, besides spawning transportation it would spawn illegitimate business because in Jerusalem the money came from different areas, you'd have money changers. Does any body remember a passage in the Scripture about money changers in Jerusalem? So here's Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate, He walks into the temple, and He sees these clowns in illegitimate business and the gentle Jesus doesn't turn out to be very gentle. He goes in there and takes a whip and He cleans house. And it must have been amazing, I mean, I'd love to see this on a film, Hollywood writing how this must have been. It must have been something about His look... I mean, one guy, and I mean, this went through the whole temple thing, this was a big, big business going on here, ripping off people with the currency exchange rates. So He goes and He cleans house in John 2. What you don't see in either here of John 2 is the government coming in with wage and price controls. Even God allows the corruption to develop, He doesn't want it, but He doesn't solve the problem by wage and price controls, and the reason is every time the government steps in and tries to limit prices, guess what happens to whatever it is that they're limiting prices on? The stuff disappears because nobody is going to sell it at a cheap price. The same thing with minimum wage, if you think about it. Teenagers need a job, some of the teenagers aren't able to produce enough produce for a store owner to pay them up to the minimum wage, but they might be here, so you hire somebody here and they'll develop, they'll come up to that wage. But if you're going to artificially say I can't pay anything less than this then you're not going to hire anybody that can't produce up to that point. So now what does that do to unemployment? It increases unemployment.

So these are examples of every time we try to solve an economic problem by government interference it always winds up screwed up and it's interesting, here was a danger; you would stimulate transportation businesses, but you would also stimulate illegitimate crooked businesses. And of course, it was up to the government to step in there, where you have corrupt businesses.

Okay, one last thing now, and it'll be the third tithe, verses 28-29; this was different because this was only every third year. So if you add up the total giving it was 23 1/3rd percent average per year. And notice the difference, it's stored in your cities. That means it did not go to Jerusalem, it was a local thing, sort of like our food cabinet here at church, it was a resource at the local level. Why the local level? Because it's the most efficient place to do this kind of stuff. You don't bring it to Jerusalem and then redistribute the food back; you do it in the local area where it's efficient process.

And so now the difference is, if you look at verse 29, you store it within your gates, and the Levite, he has no portion inheritance, he gets a cut, but now we have three other things. We have "the stranger," that's the naturalized citizen, the ger, "the fatherless," that's the orphan, "and the widow, who are within your gates." Now this has led people to argue that the third tithe is an example of a welfare system where the government coercively took this tithe and redistributed it to the poor people. The problem is the Scripture is not saying that the widow and the orphan and the naturalized citizen are poor; some of them may have been poor, but the criterion wasn't their poverty level; the criterion was whether they fit in these categories. That was the criterion, and it was that criterion because every one of those groups, the ger, the nokree, the orphan and the widow, were unable to hold title, so it was a judicial classification. These people could not legitimately own title, so therefore God is giving them the tithe, whether they're rich or poor it doesn't figure here. You could have, for example, a ger, a resident alien and this guy might be a businessman. So the criteria in the text isn't economic; the criteria in the text is judicial.

And finally in verse 29, it says a purpose for that third tithe, and it says "that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand [which you do]." So the idea there, and in the outline you see chapter 14, verse 29, the second purpose clause, the promise of economic blessing is contingent upon sharing profits with all covenant-keepers, the widows, the orphans and the ger had all pledged loyalty to the covenant. And God said I will increase your business, there's a promise of prosperity and that promise of prosperity in verse 29 is to protect against people saying oh man, you know, I give ten percent to the Levites, I'm giving ten percent to a Yahweh party in the fall, and now you want ten percent every third year. So God adds a little thing here, I will bless you, meaning I will compensate for that giving that you do.

So finally, last slide here, here's Tobit again, and here's a guy that lived in the time of the exile and he's thinking about what he used to do; this is kind of a retroreflection. So here's an example; this is not Scripture, this is the Apocrypha but it tells you what was going on in their mind. So you have this:

Tobit 1:5-8, "But I alone went often to Jerusalem for the feasts, as it is ordained for all Israel by an everlasting decree. Taking the first fruits and the tithes of my produce and the first shearings, I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, at the altar." There's tithe number one. "Of all my produce I would give a tenth to the sons of Levi who ministered at Jerusalem; the second tenth I would sell and I would go and spend the proceeds each year at Jerusalem," that's the one passage we just read now, that's tithe number two; "the third tenth I would give to those to whom it was my duty, as Deborah my father's mother had commanded me, for I was left an orphan by my father." So the way he speaks of Deborah is as his step-mother, and so he is just saying that I was an orphan, and I know what being an orphan is. So he describes that.

Finally, the economic impact of the third tithe. This is a strange one. It put the godly Israelite land-holders at an economic disadvantage because they were the ones that had to pay the third tithe, the gers didn't, the resident aliens could use land, lease land, produce crops, and they would not have to pay the third tithe; it was only the heads of Israel. And to make a long story short, that economic disadvantage along with a growing population every 50th year would mean that there would be a migration of people from the rural areas to the urban areas, and that probably, that movement in business and economics, is probably a revelation of the fact that history starts off in the garden, where does it end up? In a city, the new Jerusalem. I don't like cities, and I don't think most of you do either, but this city must have things that we won't mind, the New Jerusalem. But there is a movement there. And I think the reason why we don't like cities is because there are too many people too close with sin nature's and in the country you can get away, you get space, but in the New Jerusalem people will be resurrected and fellowship will be delightful.

Let's conclude then. Loving the Lord with all your "soul" is pictured in the statutes and judgments because they show the outworking of the Ten Commandments. It thus challenges us to think how loving the Lord in our church dispensation ought to show up in the details of how we live our life. And here's some suggestions, three suggestions:

How you deal with death and sorrow is a way of giving testimony to those around you; how you deal with death, that was what God wanted different in His people in Israel.

How we eat in the sense of being thankful for it. Now just a simple act of saying "thank you Lord" in the middle of a restaurant and you know people are watching and sometimes you maybe feel embarrassed to do that, don't; that's the Lord and it's nice to give thanks, and just quite, you don't have to be obtrusive about it, but just a quiet humble giving thanks, people notice that. It's a good testimony.

And finally, how we treat our money and our property, care of family property, care for the next generation, remember the inheritance is guarded in the Old Testament because parents thought about the next generation. They thought about how can I build character into my children so they understand wisdom, they understand how to choose, they understand

how to make the right choices so they get the right consequences of their right choices.

So all of these are cultural details that I hope emerge from all these little details in the Old Testament Law.