

Clough Deuteronomy Session 41

Deuteronomy 18:1-8; Israel's Priesthood & its Illegitimate Carryover into the Church

Fellowship Chapel; 4 January 2011

Tonight we're going to continue our series in Deuteronomy and on the outline I've given you the two, Deuteronomy 19:1-8, and 9-22, that's the whole 18th chapter, but I also want to take a minute to review and get back into the mold here, two weeks being off. Remember that this part of Deuteronomy, chapters 12-26, is an exposition of what the Ten Commandments look like in the theocracy. So what you're seeing is the outward working out of these Ten Commandments. And, of course, the theocracy means that Yahweh is King, physically and politically here. There's no hidden meaning in the word "king." Jehovah was legitimately and legally and politically and physically the King; His physical presence was there in the temple. And that made this a theocracy, which is unique in human history. We've never seen this before, never have seen it since, that special theocracy that extended in history from about 1450-1440 BC up until 586 and the fall of that theocracy when God removed the Shekinah glory.

Now what we want to remember, and we've got to constantly rehearse this, I forget this myself when I think about the basis for this whole time in human history. The basis here was that you had this contract and we can't forget this; this is unique in human history and it's a good conversation opener, conversation piece, when you get into discussions with people. There's only been one nation, only one nation in history that ever had a contract with God, period. And it's undebatable; I mean, a liberal can say well, it was just... the Bible just says that, but it's the only claim; India doesn't have that. They don't have it in any Arab country. You only have it with Israel. There's something peculiar here and unique about Israel and it's based upon the outworking of the Abrahamic contract. So there's the first blank, point 1: Based upon the outworking of the Abrahamic "contract." Remember, the Mosaic contract follows the Abrahamic contract, and that means that Israel has three basic functions that they must perform in history. They've already done two of the three; the third one they have not done.

And if you'll hold the place, let's go back into the New Testament, to Romans and just review this passage so that we fix our minds on the fact that the Apostles recognized the uniqueness of Israel as a nation. If you turn to Romans 3, Paul, going through this major New Testament epistle, makes sure that the people, the Romans, know this. And as we're going to get further up into the lesson tonight it's sad that the Roman Catholic Church, centered in the city of Rome to which this epistle is written, did what they did, forgetting something, and we'll get into one of the major mistakes that Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodox churches have made historically. But it's ironic that they were addressed here in this epistle, in Romans 3:2, it says: "Much in every way, chiefly because to them," that is to Israel, "were committed the oracles of God." So Paul insists that's that a unique thing, Israel has a claim, the Latin, the Romans never had that, the Greeks never had that, the Arabs never had that, the Africans never had that, the Caucasians of Indo-Europe never had that. It was only to Israel that these things were committed.

In Romans 9:4 we read the same thing. Paul again in this section of chapters 9, 10 and 11 he makes this point in 9:4, where he says, verse 3, "For I wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh. [4] Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory," talking there of the physical presence of God in history, "the glory, the covenants," plural, the contracts, there were more than one, "the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; [5] of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh Christ came." And so we, at that point, verse 5, he introduces the second thing. Not only was Israel to be a custodian, a recipient and a custodian of the Word of God in history, that's number one, but number two, their second function was to make clear the nature of the Messiah and to bring forth such a Messiah. And that's what Paul is saying here, "according to the flesh, Christ came." Christ was a Jew. Years ago Arnold Fruchtenbaum wrote a great little paperback book, Jesus was a Jew, and he wrote it, primarily as a witness to his fellow Jewish countrymen. But the point is that we forget that. And in that book that he wrote, and I think you still can get it from Ariel Ministries, he quotes the rabbis, that knew this, and they said yeah, Jesus was a Jew, He spoke the Jewish language, He loved Jewish children, He lived in Jewish city, He was just a thorough going Jew; by the way, He never left the geographical domain of Israel either. So that's the second thing.

Now the third thing, Matthew 23:39, so turn over to Matthew, just before He was crucified, in fact, if you turn to Matthew 21:9 we'll see the irony first. In Matthew 21:9, this is Palm Sunday, so here Jesus comes into the city and there are thousands of people gathered around Him. We know there was a great multitude because it scared the political leaders; they realized that... you know, we've got a potential insurrection we have to deal with here and Jesus is the center of this. This got the attention of the political boys in Jerusalem.

So here they are and in Matthew 21:9 the crowd begins to say, and this is what really alerted the Sanhedrin that they had a political problem of first degree, because they're citing the Psalm, and it's a Messianic Psalm. "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest." So this was shouted in the streets by thousands of people; it was a mob that was shouting this. Now tragically, it was only in lip service because only within a day or two... you know, Jesus was crucified and there was a popular thing about Him, just go ahead kill him, you know, we want Him killed. And so this shouting that's going on in verse 9, maybe there were many people there who were genuine but it does not represent the will of the nation. This was a remnant, a subset of the nation shouting this.

So, if you turn over a chapter or two, Matthew 23, Jesus picks up that very quote that the crowd on Palm Sunday had been shouting and He says, verse 38, "Your house is left to you desolate; [39] for I say to you, you shall see Me no more until you say," and He's addressing Israel, "until you say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD." And that's why prophetic scholars say that Israel has to continue to exist in history. They have got to be in existence historically in order to be the ones who invite Jesus back. And this is going to be a momentous point in human history, when Israel, through the Tribulation and all the judgments and the horrifying times that they go through, that remnant that will be

left at the end of the Tribulation will be believing Jews. And they will, some have speculated and I think it's a good speculation, they're going to go back to Isaiah 53 and they're going to be reading that and they're going to realize, you know, we made a big mistake in history; our Messiah has come and we want to welcome Him back, I mean, the world is a mess. And so Israel will then accomplish their third task. The first one is they're going to be the custodians of the oracles of Scripture, the custodians of the Word of God; number two, they bring forth the Messiah, and number three, they invite the Messiah back and that's the beginning of world peace. That will bring in what men and woman have cried for for centuries, millennia, finally having peace. Okay, so that's the theocracy.

Now on the outline I've also mentioned, just to review, that "Loving Yahweh with all the heart, Loving Yahweh with all your life," and we've gone through that, "Loving Yahweh with all your heart, that's that first section, chapter 5 thru chapter 11, loving Yahweh with the nephesh, the details of life, from chapters 12-26.

Now I wanted, at the bottom of your outline I wanted to make sure I clarified something because someone asked me about well, why are you quoting in your teaching some of the commentaries of postmillennialists, like Gary North, does that mean that we're supposed to impose these things on society. And no, that's not why I'm doing it; I'm doing it because the postmillennialists have done a lot of scholarly work on the Law for one reason, one very simple reason—they want to use the Law as public policy now. So they are the ones that are studying it carefully and much to our shame as premils we have not really done some good studies on the nature of the Law. And my point in bringing this out, and I'll bring it out again tonight, is that when you study the Law, as these people have, you realize there's an immensely powerful design to it. It's not just, you know, a plopped thing here and a proverb there and some other little component there. This is a coordinated system and I use Dr. Gary North's commentaries because he's an economist and he's very quick and very skilled at pointing out that there's an economic policy interlock with ethics in the Old Testament. And that is that God sets these little laws up, which, when you reflect upon them from the economic point of view, obedience to the Lord would have produced economic prosperity, throughout the whole land.

There was a carrot and a stick approach that God used with Israel and the carrot was literally economic blessing, wealth, and it would have been theirs had they obeyed God. But it was conditioned on obedience to God, it wasn't the case where you just do procedure 1, 2, 3, and then you're going to get rich. It's not that kind of a gospel. The point was that if they obeyed God for God's sake, one of the peripheral side benefits would have been prosperity. We'll see another example of that, as I said tonight. So there are three things that I wanted to say about how we in the church age look back at that law. We are citizens of a country, and we are citizens of a country where we have freedom to... not impose, but to convince our neighbor of what would be wise policies. We have an opportunity to vote foolish policies out and wise policies in. So we go back to the Old Testament to find wisdom principles to apply to society at large. We're not the first people to do this, I mean, this was well known

150 years ago, everybody knew this. The people who studied the law, the judges, the men who wrote legal textbooks, they all referred to this.

In fact, David Barton has pointed out in the WallBuilders, I think he went through, either he or a professor in Houston, I forget whether it was David or the guy down in Houston, but they went through and they studied the writings of the colonial fathers who were directly involved in the writing of the Constitution, and they found out that something like 30 or 40 percent of their references were to Scripture. Now that's unprecedented, you don't find that in other nations. That's what made America unique, because these guys went back... some of them probably weren't even Christians but the principles of Scripture so permeated the culture back then that they couldn't help but when they get to a political problem these things came into their mind and they said oh, this is how we solve that kind of a problem. It was sort of second nature to them.

So we want to look at how we utilize that revelational material. The first thing is: We seek wisdom principles within the law that can be brought out of the theocracy in the theocratic contractual arrangement. In other words, some of it we can't bring out, I mean, we don't have the physical Shekinah glory, like it was in the Old Testament. We don't have active prophets, we don't have active revelation going on but we are seeking wisdom principles. That's the key, we're not looking upon this as a law that everybody has to follow. We're looking upon it as that's the way God ruled a nation once. Now it might tip us off, we could learn something from how He ruled a nation because after all, it's He that's ruling the nation. So why don't we look at that and see if we can learn some wisdom principles. That's what we're saying, point 1. We seek wisdom principles that can be brought out of that theocratic contractual arrangement.

Number 2, saying much the same thing, basically all these three principles are saying the same thing: We seek principles that are expressions of God's creation design of human society that function whether within the theocratic Israel or outside it. I'll give you an example, it's a contemporary debate that's going on now that we've got "don't ask, don't tell" repealed in the military, let's just think about this whole thing about homosexuality a minute. The homosexual and the gay groups are arguing that they have an inherent freedom and a right to be recognized and so on. Now we have to be careful in our opposition, we're not trying to demean the people who are homosexuals; you have to keep this in mind. But what we are arguing is that it's a behavior that is immoral. Now they reject that, they claim that it's genetic and they can't help it and so forth and so forth, it's like they're handicapped or something and they have this thing.

But if you back off and zoom out a minute, and look at the point, what is the anatomy of the male and female? I mean, let's get back to this. If you look at form you can pretty well, if you're a creationist, say that form has a function. What is the function? It was designed to function in a certain way. Now Congress can pass all the laws they want to, the courts can do whatever they want to but I guarantee you, they haven't made one change in human anatomy, and they can't. So this is foolishness, it's trying to legitimize an immoral behavior that's in violation of human anatomy. So this is what we mean by a principle, you have a principle of

God's design, it functions in Israel and it functions outside of Israel because it's grounded in creation. And so that legitimizes transferring principles that have to do with the family and marriage over to a society today because design hasn't changed.

Point 3, we seek to filter out those features that are unique to the theocratic contractual relationship. In other words, there are some things that are unique and we have to be careful about not pulling them over. Now we have some examples, and this gets toward chapter 18 tonight, what we're looking at is some of... this whole section, from Deuteronomy 16:18-18:22, it has to do with human authority, the authority of offices within the social structure. You have different people, you have a division of labor, you have certain people in authority. But Ten Commandments wise, if you go back and say wait a minute, let me think through the Ten Commandments here, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, there's only one of the Ten Commandments that addresses the issue of authority, other than the first one, of course, God. And what's that? "Honor your father and your mother." That's talking about honoring authority, it's rooted in the family with the parents, the mom and the dad are to be honored. It doesn't mean we're infallible moms and dads, but it means that this is the social structure that is the most basic; it is where authority is learned, is from the mom and the dad.

And wherever you have a destruction of that family you can have social chaos up the kazoo as you can see in our inner cities today, all over the United States, and we pour millions of dollars into this program, millions of dollars into another program, millions of dollars into education, trying to overcome the fruit cranked out into society by dysfunctional families. And we're not doing a good job of it, quite frankly because the statistics in the school system, if you go through the different social classes and the groups that do well in school, such as the Asians... what is true of the Asians? Parental authority. Gee, why do we have to spend a million dollars on a statistical study to find out what the Word of God is already saying. Now this is not saying that every Asian is going to be a genius, but I submit to you that Asians aren't any smarter than anybody else, the difference isn't in the air, the difference isn't in the food they eat, the difference is how they run their families. And interestingly, it's statistically shows up in the success rate of their kids in school. How come? Because that's the way God designed it. And when you violate this design, and you feel for people that have to cope, like a mayor of a city, with all of the debris, the social debris that gets cranked out into the streets from dysfunctional families. And it's a mess, but you can pour millions of dollars at it but nothing's going to change unless you change the families that are dysfunctional to make them functional. And that's where the gospel comes in; I mean, what else are we going to use to cope with that. I mean, it's hard enough to run a family anyway, with the gospel, leave alone without it. And we all have to realize our families fail, every family has its problems. The first family had fratricide, I mean, look at that, it was dysfunctional from the beginning because we live in a fallen world. This is not to put a guilt trip on all of us but it's just simply to function that families are it; that's it!

So, that's a principle that carries over and the judges that we study, and the kings, were extensions of that family idea of authority. And I

think... you've seen this, certainly you see it in the military and you see it in the courts, if you have somebody that's learned respect of authority in the home it's immediately obvious in these other institutions. The people that have trouble with these other institutions are always rebelling and having a problem with them have never learned respect in the home; they've just always been rebels, they disrespect their mom, they disrespect their dad, they disrespect the cop, they disrespect the judge, they disrespect everything else, it just carries over.

So we learn six things, principles that carry out of this judge. One, the requirement for local, immediate access, that's the way God operated and we ought to operate that way, to have local, immediate access, not something eight months later but something that's local, something local because people that are local know the situation. So there's one, the requirement for local, immediate access to justice. Number two, elimination of influential manipulation of the judges, the bribes, the pressure, the lobbying that goes on. Three, the need for a transcendental standard of justice external to individual judges, meaning you have to have an objective standard. It's not the judge making things up.

It's not like the article this week in the Washington Post where somebody wrote this big long editorial making fun of the fact that this is going to be the first Congress that meets next week where they're going to actually read publicly the Constitution. And by the way, you know that principle of reading publicly the Constitution, do you know where it comes from? Deuteronomy. That's what had to happen every seven years, Moses had said I want the whole nation to come here, I don't care, after I'm gone we're going to read the entire law. You're worried about how long the Constitution is, imagine reading the book of Deuteronomy. That was a public reading, so that everybody is on the same page here. So this guy in the Washington Post says oh, I don't think we should read the Constitution because gosh, that was written over a hundred years ago... it was written over two hundred years ago pal. And it's, you know, people thought differently then and everybody has a different idea about the thing. Well, everybody might have a different idea about his editorial. So why did he write the editorial? So this is the principle, the specific principle, read it.

And then we have point four, the use of strict rules of evidence, that was given in the courts, that gets rid of the personal emotion and animosities and all the other stuff that goes on. Five, the need to address violated consciences, and I put that one in there because one of the principles of law is that if it's correctly designed is it reinforces ethics. And the problem, that makes all of us think about the fact that we morally fail and if you keep hitting people with the fact with a moral failure, moral failure, moral failure, moral failure, legalism like that, the problem is after a while you just get moral fatigue. And a society can get morally fatigued, our society shows signs of this all over the place. In the 30s and 40s, well actually in the 40s and 50s we had so much dysfunctional marriage going on in this country that we lowered the divorce standards; no-fault divorce. What was that due to? It was a relaxation of the old laws of divorce where you have to prove a legitimate reason for the divorce. You don't have to today, you go from this standard down. Why did they go down? Because of moral fatigue. There's just too much violation

of it so you lower your standard because otherwise you can't enforce the standard anyway so you might as well lower it. And now we're lowering it another notch by redefining marriage.

And this is the way it goes; a society has moral fatigue. Now the answer to that is the gospel. When our consciences are violated, we are made aware that we're sinful before a holy, righteous God, and that's depressing. But the good news is that in Jesus Christ we have Him paying [for] the sin problem, paying the sentence, and giving us, by imputation, righteousness, and being born again and having the indwelling Holy Spirit. That's the good news, and that good news is the only thing that is going to solve, to deal with moral fatigue. People can't take being battered over the head all the time, over and over; there's got to be an answer otherwise get rid of the hammer so I don't keep getting hit in the head with it. See, moral fatigue will lower standards without some solution to the problem.

And then finally we have legitimacy of capital punishment. This is very, very offensive today. Most people in our society now condemn capital punishment, some for legitimate reasons, sometimes we have the case where the only people that get capitally punished are the ones that can't afford a wealthy attorney; that sometimes is the case. But that is not an excuse to do away with the whole idea. In the Bible capital punishment is inseparable from the fourth divine institution of the civil state. And do you know why we know that? What is the symbol, biblically, of government? It's the sword, it's a lethal weapon. Why is that? It's not dove, the symbol of government in the Bible is the sword. That is it, capital punishment.

Then in the office of the king, there we had in the last lesson two things basically, a limitation on his authority, in other words, he was limited by the law. Remember the king, he had to do what every day? And when he became king what did he have to do? He had to transcribe the Law from the book of the priests. So he had to go through this, the king really had to know this. Number two, the office of the king was an add-onto Israel, it was not necessary to Israel. The people thought it was necessary because they wanted something visible, they wanted something they could look at, they wanted something that was politically vibrant. And God was an invisible king. We don't want an invisible king, we want a visible king, we want something like that. And so that's why they brought up the office of king.

But the key you want to take away from this whole discussion about the limitations of the king is this: the king stands for centralized government and when you have king and force centralized government, the government is not a tool of redemption; all the government is there to do is to restrain evil, and allow good to flourish. It has an ethical function but it is not a redemption thing. This is what's wrong with all the utopian schemes from Karl Marx, through the socialists and everybody else, they always want to turn the government into a church and try to take over the church; they're going to do this, they're going to fix poverty, they're going to fix this, they're going to fix that. No, you just take care of the crime problem and you take care of the defense problem. That's the primary function of government.

Now we come to Deuteronomy 18 and now we come to the third office, we've done the judge, we've done the king and now we're going to deal with the priests. And we want to deal, if you look at Deuteronomy 18:1-8, follow me when I read this through, and this is talking about this third office. And we have to do something very special with this third office because there's no corresponding third office in our nations today, so we have to ask ourselves, wait a minute, what happens to this priest's office business. So let's look at it.

"The priests, the Levites--all the tribe of Levi--shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and His portion. [2] Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the Lord is their inheritance, as He said to them. [3] "And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether it is bull or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach. [4] The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. [5] For the Lord your God has chosen him out of all your tribes," and here's the key, purpose clause, watch the purpose clause, "in order to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons forever." Notice the word "minister." [6] So if a Levite comes from any of your gates, from where he dwells among all Israel, and comes with all the desire of his mind to the place which the Lord chooses, [7] then he may serve in the name of the Lord his God as all his brethren the Levites do, who stand there before the Lord. [8] They shall have equal portions to eat, besides what comes from the sale of his inheritance."

Now there's some details we want to clean up in the text here, but the big picture first. Priests had to be Levites, but all Levites weren't priests. That's toward the end here. Levi was a special tribe that was set apart for God. The priests had to be Levitical. Now this, actually you see this with Moses, Moses was a Levite and remember what happened at Sinai? Moses goes up there, God gives him the Ten Commandments, what's going on down below? Wild parties, idolatry, and what happens when God tells Moses to come back down? Break the tablets, smash them. And it wasn't just because Moses was angry. The breaking of those tablets meant the contract had been broken; it would be like tearing up a piece of paper. What did Moses do? Think about this, he's a Levite. He almost fell into this because God comes to Moses and He says you know, I'm tired of these people down here, let's get rid of them and we'll make a new nation of you. Now if you think about that, that almost looks like if God really meant that would violate the Abrahamic Covenant, because the Abrahamic Covenant said the Messiah shall come through Judah.

So what's the deal with God coming to Moses and saying let's knock these people off and I'll make a new nation out of you? It was to stimulate within Moses' heart something. What did Moses do when God said that to him? Remember? He made intercession for the nation, Lord, don't take it away, You've already started a work with this country, the Egyptians are going to laugh at us and so forth and so on, he goes on. What is Moses doing? He's acting as a Levitical priest there, he's making intercession for sinful people. That's the function of the priest and Moses pictures that in his being.

Well, in this passage he's going to deal with what the priests do and how they're supported. We've kind of gone through that a little bit in the economic section. So now if you'll follow on your outline there's some things here that we need to cover. One is the importance for the Church of dealing with this priest business. Two things we want to look at, then we're going to go to the New Testament depiction of church officials. Priests, the idea behind the word "priest" is an intermediary between God and man. You've got to keep that in mind because I'm going to take that idea and I'm going to run with it. Now watch what happens.

The priest is an intermediary between God and man. Why does there have to be an intermediary between God and man? Because God is holy and man is sinful. The priest comes into existence because of the fall. There has to be an intermediary between God and man, that's the key idea. But you want to see something here because we're going to trace this idea through the Old Testament and then boom, we're going to go into the Church and we're going to watch what happens. Priests act as intermediaries between God and man in the Old Testament, but nowhere in the post-pentecostal church New Testament record does it exist outside of Jesus Christ. There is not talk about any priests after Pentecost. Now you have to think about, why is that? How come there's no talk about priests with regard to the Church? What has happened here, something different has changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Number two, the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches insist upon continuing the priesthood as the core ministry of the Church rather than the teaching, evangelistic and edifying ministries as core. Now what we're doing here is we have to deal with a big, big bunch of church history here; it's still going on around us. We're dealing with the idea of a priesthood. Obviously, many of you were Roman Catholic so you know this. I've come out of a high Anglican background and I know this, we used to call the guy the priest, and so you know about this, this is the pastor isn't called pastor, it's a priest, the local priest is the center of the whole thing. Now why is it called the priest? Where did that get started? It's not in the New Testament, so where does it come from? That's what we want to look at.

So point B, the New Testament depiction of Church officials. No New Testament evidence exists of any office outside of the "apostle," "elder," and the "deacon." The elders was taken over from Israel, the synagogues of Israel, remember after 586 there was no theocracy any more so what did the Jews do? They had no temple to go to, they had no place to do sacrifice, so the Jewish community after 586 had little groups like we do, little churches. And they were synagogues, and the people that ruled the synagogue were the elders. And I've listed all the verses that deal with this word "elder," "elder was synonymous with the word "bishop." And so this is the way the Church got organized.

I want to show you two quotes, from Ronald Diprose, who wrote a book, Israel and the Church. Now Diprose is writing here, this is his PhD dissertation, and he published it in a book, he spent years putting this dissertation together, so a lot of research went into this thing. He went through church history in the early centuries, so he's got a very thorough book. It's a great book to get, by the way, if you have Roman Catholic friends and you want a little background for conversation, I would

recommend this book, Ronald Diprose, and the title of it is Israel and the Church. And here's what he says.

He says, "In light of later developments, it is striking that nowhere in the New Testament are elders invested with a priestly function," priestly function; what was the function? To stand between God and man. Do you ever find an elder in the New Testament taking on a priestly function? Diprose says no, you can't find it. You have them teaching, you have them leading the shepherds, but you don't have them making intercession for them as a class above the average person. That's why he says: "...invested with the priestly function which sets them apart from the rest of the church." That is not there in the New Testament. "Moreover, no list of spiritual gifts," this is a neat argument, "no list of spiritual gifts includes a particular charisma for performing priestly functions." Think about the spiritual gifts, you can list them all through, 1 Corinthians, you can go in Ephesians 4, where is there a priestly gift? It doesn't exist. Now if it doesn't exist what is the Holy Spirit talking about here? Obviously it can't be the core ministry, and yet here we have the great movements in historic Christianity for the first five, six hundred years, making the priest the function of everything and there's not a word in the New Testament, no gifts for it. So we have to look at what's going on here. "The purpose of all the gifts was the edification of the Church, not mediation between God and other church members." "Peter and the writer to the Hebrews make it clear that priesthood is a prerogative of all members," you are a priest, I am a priest. If you are born again you are a priest. You do not need anybody to come between you and God. That is what you have by virtue of your position in the Lord Jesus Christ; that's freedom that you have. It was that freedom that terrified Europe with the Reformation. That's what unnerved the whole Catholic Church in Europe, the idea that the individual believer could come to God independently of the hierarchy of the Church. At one fell swoop the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer destroyed the intimidation of structure.

And this, by the way, is the key to freedom, to human freedom. If we have freedom to go, and you have freedom to go directly to God, independently of anyone else, there is no government that can stand in the way, they can put you in jail, they can kill you, but they cannot sever your direct access to the throne of grace; think about it. That puts you in a powerful position. You and I have the right to pray, regardless, it could be someday in the middle of a dark jail, but no jailor and no kind of persecution can ever stop your intercession and your relationship with the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is our priest, He is the One who is our advocate, as 1 John say, He is our righteousness in God's presence; we don't need a human priest.

Furthermore, as he goes on to say in his book, on page 102 is the first quote, this one I think is on page 104, he points this out. He takes two Roman Catholic scholars that have studied this situation from the first three or four hundred years. So he says this, and he lists who these scholars are with the references if you get the book. "For our purposes it is significant that, according to two Roman Catholic scholars who write concerning ecclesiology and ecclesiastical institutions in the early church, certain elements," now what he's getting at here, watch this, if it doesn't come out of the pages of the New Testament where does the idea

of priest come from? Answer" "...certain elements in the developing Christian liturgy were patterned on aspects of Jewish liturgy."

Oh, now we've got an interesting situation; we're borrowing from the Old Testament but is it legitimate borrowing from the Old Testament? In other words, it's going back, the whole idea of the priestly garments; where do you think that comes from? It comes out of the Old Testament. So here we have a wholesale importation out of the Old Testament, theologically out to lunch, there's no reason theologically for it, it's just that the Church did something, they wanted to have... you know, priests, the Jews had priests, we need priests. But to say that ignores what Jesus has done.

So in the next slide and in the chart on your notes, I've given you a little bit of church history, this is again based on his book and based on his discussion for hundreds of pages, so I had to read hundreds of pages for you to create that chart. But this gives you a flavor for what went on. And look at the dates, look how early this happened. It seems like right after the apostles died the Church went crazy; it's almost unimaginable that these guys that were only one generation removed from the apostles went so quickly into this mode. And it's interesting, they weren't getting it from their contemporary Jews, were they? How do we know that they weren't getting it from contemporary Jews, thru them in the first century? There was no Jewish priesthood. Why? No temple. When did the temple go away? Well, you had Herod's temple, of course, and the priesthood that way, but out in the boonies you didn't have priests in Greece, you didn't have priests in Thessalonica, you didn't have priests in Rome. You had pagan priests.

So here's what goes on here, if you look at the first line, 1st Clement, I mean, this is 90-100 AD, John the Apostle just barely died here, and he mentions three levels of priestly ministry distinguished from laity using Levitical terminology.

The second guy, Ignatius, mentions the priest-laity distinction, plus when they served communion now they introduced an altar. So now it doesn't become a supper any more, now we've got to have an altar. So here we go.

Then we have Justin Martyr, some of these guys had some good ideas, by the way, they weren't all heretics, it was just in this area; applies Old Testament promises given to Israel and he applies them to the Church; the Eucharist is described as analogous to the Old Testament Levitical sacrifices.

Then you have Irenaeus, develops further the parallel between Old Testament Levitical sacrifices and the Eucharist as the sacrifice conducted by the Church priesthood through making an invocation to God. He's the one that started setting up what became the liturgy of the priests when he offers the wafer, and the idea that he calls upon God and the wafer turns into Christ's body, the transubstantiation doctrine. Well, that invocation goes all the way back to here where they're calling upon God as the high priest would call upon God in Israel.

Origen, physical Old Testament Israel is only a "type" of the true people of God.

And Cyprian who was the guy that really did a lot of this stuff, he, by the way, was the first one to use the word "Catholic" for the Roman Catholic Church which is an ironic thing because the word "Catholic" means universal, and then he localizes it by saying it's the Roman Catholic Church.

So anyway we go back to Deuteronomy 18. Now all that by way of background to have us understand the importance of the priests. Now what we're going to do now, very quickly, we're going to go through what are the priests doing here, so that then we can say, okay, why was the big mistake bringing this over like that; why did it happen? The priests were an office, the third office. Turn to Numbers 18:1-7 and you'll see where this office is spelled out and the context of how it was spelled out. There's a word or a phrase in this section we want to check on. See if you can notice, ask yourself as you look at this text, what is the work of the priest? How is it described? What is the vocabulary of his work profile?

Numbers 18:1, "Then the Lord said to Aaron: You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood. [2] Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and your sons are with you before the tabernacle of witness. [3] They shall attend to your needs and all the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they die--they and you also. [4] They shall be joined with you and attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle; but an outsider shall not come near you. [5] And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, that there may be no more wrath on the children of Israel. [6] Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the Lord, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. [7] Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

Now what kind of a picture of access do you have here? What is going on with this priest function? The outsiders will be killed. The priests were armed, they had the legitimacy and they're the only interesting case, they're not civil officers executing people. The priests had the authority, the civil authority, to execute judgment by capital punishment on anybody that came close to that sanctuary. Now what is that a picture of. Let's think about the soteriology here. It's talking about God's holiness and sin, isn't it. You can't waltz into the presence of God; the whole lesson plan here is to wall off and prevent people from coming into the presence of God, and that is to teach us that you don't, contrary to everybody that thinks they can make up their own idea of God and they have the right to approach Him, that's not the lesson you get out of the Bible. God is not approachable, except on His terms, and His terms are blood sacrifice. You see, this is why Jesus Christ on the cross, it's so central, so important, if Jesus had not died we would still be doing this priesthood thing. Right? We wouldn't have access to God. So why do we

deal with priests now for? Jesus has done His work. This is a tremendous error that has crept up into church history and is still with us, the idea that you and I as believers in Jesus Christ are not worthy, that we have no access to the throne of grace. That's absolutely false and it's been institutionalized so that millions of people out in our own country think this way, that they have to go through a priest in order to get to God. And it sets God apart. And that was the purpose in the Old Testament because Christ had not yet come. That's the point.

Notice in Numbers 18:22, look at this verse, see the separation theme. "Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die." So it's separation, separation, separation, separation. So the word "separation" and the word "priest" go together. And go back to the verses that we read, verses 1-7 and you'll see something interesting. Do you see where it says in verse 1, "you and your sons in your father's house with you, shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary. Then it says "your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood." These guys are involved with sin. The priesthood is all about sin, it's all about getting cleansed, it's how do I get rid of this sin and this cleansing in order to come to a holy righteous God. That's the function of the priest. And it's all anticipating the point of Christ's coming. This is where the idea of Messiah is going to come up. Messiah is going to deal with this issue; the Messiah has got to deal with the priestly issue because if He doesn't deal with the priestly issue we are separated from God, and utterly dependent on an intermediary priesthood.

And so it was that in Numbers 3, if you'll look there a moment, another function of these priests, same verse that you have heard before but I want to show you a second place so you don't think it's just coming from one passage of Scripture. Back in Numbers 3:10, "So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, that they shall attend to their priesthood, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death." So it's pretty... not ambiguous here what's going on.

So summarizing now, following your outline, we have the priests, what they were doing before Christ came. The priests were the custodians of the nation's Scriptures, we already know that from Deuteronomy 17:18, they kept the Word of God. And the high priest had limited access to revelation in the sense of yes/no answers. Now there was some revelation the priest had but it was yes or no, it was the Urim and Thummim, the priestly garments. We don't know what those things were, we just know that when they had a question of whether they should go into battle or not they would ask the high priest, he would go before the Lord and whether the stones his vestment would illuminate we don't know, but something gave them the yes/no answer. It wasn't like a prophet that's coming up. This is going to be the next office. The priests are not people who are conveyers of revelation, they are protectors and cleaners of sin to come before a holy God. They were the custodians of the Scriptures but they didn't write the Scriptures. These guys didn't add to the Bible, they just kept it as a thing for the nation.

Also you remember back from our discussion with the judges, that's why in that section about judges and religion, remember we thought about law and religion back in lesson 40 or 39 and I pointed out that the priests were

there at the courts. You say what were the priests doing at the courts? Because the judge was a civil office, he had to apply the law to this case, this case, this case, he was involved in the rules of evidence, was this person lying, was it perjury here, is this evidence sufficient for a conviction and so forth. That was the judge's thing, but the judge had to rely on a standard and it was the priest who carried the standard. The priest was the conveyer of the Word of God. So when the Supreme Court of Israel there was always a priest. The priest and the judge worked together. And that was a witness to the fact that the court can't exist apart from a transcendental standard. And the question, of course, every Gentile nation likes ours faces is what is the transcendental standard?

So now we come to one last little note in Gary North's study of this where he did an analysis of the law about the priest could not have land in the rural areas but they could own land in the cities. This is intriguing but what North, as the economist, shows here, what do you suppose happens if Israel prospers? Their population increases, but the land doesn't. So if your family has this plot of land that every fifty years reverts to your name, but you have many kids and your kids have kids and they have kids, what happens to the family plot per person of your descendants? It gets smaller and smaller. So North puts two and two together and he comes up with this:

"The multiplication of the Israelite population-long life, coupled with no miscarriages would have shrunk the size of each inheriting generation's family plot. We might even call this God's plot against family plots. The Levites would have been owners of urban real estate, which would rise in value as the Israelites moved from the farms and aliens moved to Israel. God placed them in the geographical centers of future economic growth, assuming that the nation kept God's covenant." So there was an economic incentive. It would take an economist to look at the text and suck this out of the text, but it's intriguing that this shows you the tremendous wisdom that's going on in the Law here. It has an eloquence to it that you don't get at if you don't really think through, what would have happened if they obeyed? Would this happen? Would this happen? It cascades into blessings.

Our time is up tonight so I'm not going to get into Roman III because Roman III will actually be part of Deuteronomy 18:9 through the end of the chapter, deals with the office of the prophet, and you might as we look at that, just take a minute here and if you go back to Deuteronomy 18 you're going to see a passage that doesn't seem to fit. And this is another one of those things that when you observe the Bible and you read along, verse after verse after verse after verse after verse and all of a sudden you hit a chunk that just doesn't fit right, you have to ask yourself, wait a minute, Moses wasn't stupid, why did he put this in here. Well, see if you can think through quickly why.

Look at verses 9-14, "When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. [10] There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer; [11] or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. [12] For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD,

and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you," and so forth and so on.

Now why on earth is that stuck in right after dealing with the office of priest. What did we say the priest did not have? He could not access further revelation. And in the course of history decisions have to be made. And Israel was a theocracy and so they were in a covenant, so what's God... how's He interpreting the contract? Are we obedient to Him? It required extra revelation and the pagan nations, they didn't have any Bible to start with. So the divination, why do people go to this stuff? To learn about the future. Knowledge of the future is a costly thing and the reason why it has such high cost is because every decision is your life made up against the idea of the future. Think of an investment; are you going to invest in this business or this business? How can you ever think of investing or doing a business deal without thinking about the risk that you're undertaking about the future. Knowledge of the future is integral and economically costly. So there's a pressure, economic if nothing else, on learning about the future. Military decisions have to be made. Do we risk a campaign against this target? What is my risk to myself and my men to do this? I need knowledge of the future.

So these are the pressures that come upon the nation, and this little section here, verses 9-14, sets up the situation for the fourth office, the office of a prophet. So this is all going to set up for why God brings the prophets into existence in history. They are not the kings, they are not the judges, and they are not the priests. These are a distinct work that has to be done here, a distinct role, a distinct job. So that's where we'll stop tonight and next time we'll get into the whole idea of the prophet.