

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”

April 10, 2016

- ✓ Deuteronomy 18:1-20:20 – Prohibition against occult activity.
- ✓ 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 – Our present and future building.
- ✓ Psalm 37:23-40— The Lord is our Stronghold.

REFLECTIONS:

Deuteronomy 18:1-20:20 – Note the mention of divination, sorcery, omens, and those who cast spells. This activity boils down to an attempt to control people, circumstances, and creation by some type of “magical” manipulation—basically, an attempt to control nature and God. The study of ethnology has demonstrated conclusively that earliest man began with monotheism all around the world only to devolve into such things like animism, totemism, and various occult activity. Before the modern scientific discipline of archaeology, the popular view in academia was that man began with crude religion of animism and totemism only to grow, mature, or evolve into a high view of God we see in monotheism. This evolutionary view teaches that mankind created religion and god out of some need—so, religion is not based on reality, it is only created by man to fill some functional need. However, the development of archaeology enabled man to examine man’s religious beliefs based on historical evidence like artifacts, rather than posit some evolutionary theory of development. What they found was that at the earliest level all around the world, the most primitive tribes were monotheistic and their view of God’s attributes are like our modern orthodox views. Archaeology reveals four major cultural levels, see above. It is in the primordial level that we find monotheism in all of the various tribes around the world (e.g., Africa, California, Australia, Alaska, Amazon, et al). This is acknowledged by unbelievers, like Andrew Lang, who provided a devastating critique of all of his peers’ evolutionary theories. In fact, Lang thought that the view of God by the earliest tribes was superior in many ways to modern views of God. Consider the attributes of God known by the most primitive man: eternity, omniscience, omnibenevolent, omnipotent, and the Supreme, who is the giver of moral codes related to life, property, and marriage. The fact is uncontested that man began with monotheism. However, since he could not be in control with such a God, he refashioned Him into all of the gods with the occult activity that we see grow in the other three layers. The polytheism and occult activity was abruptly stopped in certain areas by the introduction of Judaism in the Old Testament, Christianity in the New Testament, and Islam among the Arabs. By the way, all of this historical evidence confirms Romans 1:20 that ever since the creation of the world man understood the nature of God through natural revelation. Though it is not absolutely needed, it is nice to find historical confirmation of the Word of God that we can actually examine empirically.

Tertiary: Ancient City Builders
Secondary: Agriculturalists
Primary: Hunters and Horticulturalists
Primordial: Hunter-gatherer = monotheists

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 – Paul was a tent maker who was very well aware of the temporal nature of man-made tents. Undoubtedly, he made and repaired tents and thus knew all of their flaws as well as tendencies to wear out. So, it is not a stretch for him to draw the connection from man-made tents to mortality: *2 Corinthians 5:1, For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* Like the earthly tents Paul made, which were used for homes as with the Israelites in the wilderness, earthly homes will eventually break down. Paul contrasts the eternal house of God with our temporal house (body) in three ways: its origin is different (from Heaven), it is permanent (eternal), and it is assembled by God rather than man (not build by human hands). This is the passage that is used to teach that there is an interim body in Heaven for each believer before he gets his resurrection body. Regardless if this is what the passage has in mind, there can be no doubt that those who have died have a body as they await their resurrection bodies, as we see with Moses and Elijah at the Mount of Transfiguration. In verse 2 Paul says that while we are in these temporal and corruptible bodies we “groan” (στενάζομεν). As I really tried to stress in yesterday’s Bible class, many of our difficulties are due to the fact that we are in a corrupt world with corrupt bodies. Understanding this has a way of shutting our mouths from talking about how God is bringing in evil suffering in our lives as tests every time we have a health issue. To be sure, God is always there to turn evil suffering associated with our defective bodies into the greater good of Himself and His truth, but let us stop blaming God every time we run into a problem. It is not fair to God and it is not even fair or good for us to make ourselves the issue as per “passing another test”—such a mentality feeds a victim mentality as well as “spiritual” narcissism, masochism—and a romantic view of suffering/evil. Furthermore, there are far too many Christians who make poor choices (like not being diligent with their spiritual life in putting the Lord and His Word first and foremost in the life), and when they reap the consequences turn around and in a pious or spiritual manner talk about how God is testing them in the difficulties to make them greater—when the difficulties are often a result of having a corrupted body or soul (from having bad genes to being exposed to bad environment to being weak spiritually for neglect of the spiritual life with the Lord). I wonder how many Christians suffer from abusing their bodies only to in effect blame God and put self on a pedestal of “suffering for spiritual growth.” Give me a break! As I strenuously and repeatedly attempted to point out yesterday, the issue in all difficulties is not so much the whys but the Who! God is always there to redeem any person out of suffering from our broken, rebellious, and defective world. To be sure, God does still heal, but one should not tempt the Lord by blaming Him for trials that are a result from bad choices or simply from a corrupt broken world that goes back to Adam. From the beginning, all that God created was “good.” It is man who messed everything up and continues to rebel against his Maker. Let us not forget that God is still in control by virtue of the fact that He gives all things existence and is the only “Stronghold” and place of refuge from the wicked as per this passage.

Psalm 37:23-40— In contrast with the retribution for the wicked, David lists blessings of the Lord for the righteous, like God establishing, protecting, and giving them wisdom (37:23-31). In verses 32-40 we have a description of the conflict between the righteous and the wicked. David concludes that even though we live in a world filled with wicked people, the Lord is always the salvation and stronghold for those who take refuge in Him from the wicked. As per our recent studies, it is not as if God sends evildoers as a test for His righteous ones and then turns around to welcome the believer to Himself. The conflict is due to the real natures of the wicked and righteous. There will always be conflict between the righteous and the wicked. But the Lord is always there to protect the righteous (those with spiritual integrity).

In, with, for, and unto Him,

Pastor Don