

Leviticus 26 and the United States

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PREFACE

I am going to begin with an important admonition. Be like the Bereans spoken of in Acts 17:11. Look up these things I say for yourself and come to your own conclusions.

Introduction

The book of Leviticus contains a list of blessings that God promises to bestow upon Israel if they follow His commands. It also contains a list of consequences if they do not follow His commands. Israel was set aside by God to serve as an example through which the rest of the world can know Him. As such, with few exceptions, what applies to Israel, also applies to every other nation in the world.

The United States began with a Christian background. Its laws formed on a Christian basis. While the constitution does keep religion and state governance separate, the country did follow Christian ideals for a time. Even so, the country is still subject to God's desires. The rules that apply to Israel and thus the blessings and consequences, apply to the United States as well; with the exception of those that apply to being a chosen nation.

The Book of Leviticus – The Creation of the Jewish Nation

Leviticus is the third book of Moses. It contains a list of rules and regulations the Israelites were to follow concern a great number of things; everything from what to do about skin infections to how to perform the various sacrifices and how to treat the land. One section specifically lists out what God will do to both bless Israel if they keep His covenant and what He will do to curse Israel if they do not follow His commands.

Leviticus is one of those books that is difficult to read and understand. It is, nonetheless, important. Israel is important to the God's plan and the rules governing Israel are important for us to understand since Israel is to be an example He uses to show the rest of the world, the gentile world, His nature and His grace.

We can find the promise of the creation of the Jewish nation through the covenant made with Abraham (formerly Abram). Chapter 12, verses 2-3 state,

²I'll make a great nation of your descendants, I'll bless you, and I'll make your reputation great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I'll bless those who bless you, but I'll curse the one who curses you, and through you all the people of the earth will be blessed." (ISV)

It is re-affirmed and refined through Jacob, who was renamed Israel. Abraham was to be the father of many nations, Jacob (Israel) is to be the progenitor of a nation. That is the nation of Israel being a subset of the nations that were promised to come from Abraham's descents. Israel, the nation, is set aside to be God's holy people. This is expressed in

numerous places throughout the Bible. One reference is in Deuteronomy 7 beginning at verse 6.

Israel was not chosen because the people were special in any way. They weren't exceptionally godly or more numerous than the rest of the people's of the world. In fact, the Bible reflects that God says precisely this same thing. That can be found in Deuteronomy 7:7-8, where it is written,

⁷“It was not because you were more numerous than other people of the earth that the LORD committed himself to you and chose you. In fact, you were the least numerous of all the peoples. ⁸But the LORD loved you and kept his oath that he made to your ancestors. The LORD brought you out with great power from slavery, from the control of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

The Biblical Foundation of the United States

Now we come to the formative years of the United States. The founding fathers were well known to have a religious background^{1 2 3} and more importantly a belief in the deity of God. In fact, the very constitution of the United States declares its base freedoms are granted from God (The Declaration of Independence).

Richard B. Morris lists seven founding fathers in his book “Seven Who Shaped Our Destiny: The Founding Fathers as Revolutionaries”. He lists them as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Jay, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton. While many arguments exist attempting to rewrite history stating that the founding fathers were completely without religion, it is evident from their writings that this was not the case.

Benjamin Franklin's states in his autobiography, “I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that he made the world, and governed it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue reward, either here or hereafter.”

George Washington, in his inaugural speech acknowledged the sovereignty of God over all of creation and the nations of the earth.

“...it would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can

¹ The Faiths of Our Fathers: What America's Founders Really Believed by Alf J. Mapp Jr.

² The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America by Frank Lambert.

³ The Revolution of Belief Founding Fathers, Deists, Orthodox Christians, and the Spiritual Context of 18th Century America © 2007, by Jim Peterson http://earlyamericanhistory.net/founding_fathers.htm

supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States ...”⁴

Incidentally, it is said that George Washington took the oath of office with his hand on a Bible open to Deuteronomy 28. I leave it as an exercise to the reader to look that up and conclude why it is so apropos.

An entry in John Adams’ diary reads, “Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged in conscience, to temperance, frugality, and industry; to justice, kindness, and charity towards his fellow men; and to piety, love and reverence toward Almighty God...What a Utopia, what a Paradise would this region be.”⁵

At the Jefferson memorial, Panel three reads:

"God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever. Commerce between master and slave is despotism. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free. Establish a law for educating the common people. This it is the business of the state and on a general plan."

In “Memorial and Remonstrance”, James Madison writes:

“...It is unalienable also, because what is here a right towards men, is a duty towards the Creator. It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to him. This duty is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society. Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Govenour (sic) of the Universe: ...”⁶

Alexander Hamilton said after the 1787 Constitutional Convention,

“For my own part, I sincerely esteem it a system which without the finger of God, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interests.”

It is established, then, that while the founders of this country wisely opted to keep a separation of the governance of religion and the governance of the country, they did have a biblical background, belief and basis upon which they wrote the constitution of these

⁴ President George Washington’s Inaugural Speech <<http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres13.html>>

⁵ John Adams Diary <<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=D1>>

⁶ Memorial and Remonstrance <http://www.constitution.org/jm/17850620_remon.htm>

United States. So for a time, we enjoyed a certain prosperity similar to the blessings that are outlined in Leviticus 26.

A Brief History of Early Israel

A reading of the early history of Israel shows that they, too enjoyed a certain amount of prosperity exactly as promised. Israel was given a specific covenant and was chosen to be set apart by God as an example for the rest of the nations of the world. That includes the United States, even though it did not exist at the time of the creation of the nation of Israel. While we are not subject to The Law of Moses⁷, we do have an obligation to follow His statutes.

The Lord is consistent and just. So what happens to Israel must therefore happen to the rest of the world's nations with exception of specific promises given to Israel due to their status of being set apart. So, as we look at the history of the United States, we see that in many respects it is similar to that of Israel and consistent with the list of blessings laid out at the beginning of Leviticus 26.

³“If you live by my statutes, obey my commands, and observe them, ⁴then I’ll send your rain in its season so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will yield their fruit. ⁵Threshing will extend to the time of vintage and the vintage will extend to the time of sowing so that you’ll eat your bread to your satisfaction and live securely in your land.”

⁶“I’ll give peace in the land so that you’ll lie down without fear. I’ll remove wild beasts from the land, not even war will come to your land. ⁷Instead you’ll pursue your enemies and they’ll die by the sword before you. ⁸Five of you will chase a hundred, a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.

⁹“I’ll look after you, ensuring that you’ll be fruitful. I’ll increase your number and keep my covenant with you. ¹⁰When you have consumed what was stored of the old, then you’ll take out the old and replace it with what’s new.

Indeed, the United States was once considered to be the bread basket to the world. No wars had come to the shores of this country. We enjoyed unprecedented success through the resources of the land. The country did become fruitful and expand from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. We did chase away the enemies who attacked us. There were few exceptions, such as the war of 1812 and the civil war and the dust bowl of the 1930s; just as Israel was not kept from war with its neighbors. Throughout the history defined from Joshua through Chronicles, Israel alternately fell away from God and returned to Him. As such, they alternately fell to their neighbors and repelled them.

⁷ Council of Jerusalem as written in Acts 15.

However, Israel continued to turn further and further from God's precepts and just as He promised prosperity for following His commands; He also explicitly promises a cascading set of consequences for not following them.

America's Decline from God

It is no secret that we, as a nation, have been turning further away from God's precepts. This began in earnest by outlawing prayer in school in the 1962-1963 court cases of Engel v. Vitale (1962) and Murray v. Curlett (1963). Further, the sexual revolution of the 1960s along with the increase in drug use that began during that time shows we have fallen even further from God and are ever increasingly relying on our own concepts of what is right and wrong. The American Religious Identification Survey has indicated a decline in adults who identify themselves as Christians since 1990. It also shows the numbers who profess no religious identification at all has doubled from 1990 to 2001. Arrogantly we have decided that God has no place in our schools, in our movies, indeed, even in our society in general and for an increasing number, our very lives. Separation of Church and State has become Absence of Church from the State. There are even efforts to remove the phrase "In God We Trust" our money. Though I doubt God has much use for our money, it shows how far we have come in attempting to remove Him from our lives.

God's Promised Consequences for National Apostasy – Examples of How these Consequences are Playing out for the United States

Just as there is a list of blessings promised to The Nation who follows His commands, and I propose subsequently to any nation, there is also a list of cascading consequences. Since God is consistent and Israel is set as an example, it is my belief that the United States, too, is subject to these cascading consequences. The only difference being that God did not give us a promise to be His people and so we do not get the promise of returning to a land set aside for us. The consequences are also in Leviticus 26 and are listed as such:

First,

"I'll appoint sudden terror to infect you like tuberculosis and fever. Your eyes will fail and your life will waste away. You'll plant in vain, because your enemies will consume what you plant.

"I'll set my face against you so that you'll be defeated before your enemies. Those who hate you will have dominion over you and you'll keep fleeing even when no one is pursuing you.

One cannot argue that this is already happening to us. I find it interesting that tuberculosis is specifically listed, though this is from the ISV (International Standard Version). The King James version reads:

“...I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart:...”

The burning ague is King James language for disease. It describes a fever.

In any case, it is clear the terror and disease are promised as the first stage of consequences.

I mentioned that it was interesting that tuberculosis was chosen by the ISV translation team. It turns out that there was a time not long ago that it was believed by medical experts that tuberculosis cases would actually be significantly reduced by the year 2000 and the disease itself was to be eliminated shortly after that⁸. However, it turns out that beginning in the 1980s cases of Tuberculosis have actually increased. So, too, cases of typhoid fever as also shown in “A tale of Two Trends: Tuberculosis and Typhoid Fever”. In 1983, the AIDS epidemic began to show. While it actually started before 1983, it was May of 1983 when the name was given to the new virus.

There is another part of this first consequence, that of being given to terror. We live in the age of terror. While terrorism has existed since the beginning of civilization, one is hard pressed to argue that this country lives in a constant state of terror and crisis. We can no longer board an airplane with a bottle of water. The September 11, 2001 collapsing of the Twin Towers is well remembered, but the age of terror began even before that. In fact it wasn't the first time an attempt was made to bring those buildings down. On February 26, 1993, there was an attempt to bomb the world trade center from the parking garage. On April 19, 1995, the Alfred P. Murrah Federal building was destroyed by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols. The shoe bomber was apprehended on an attempt to bring down an airplane for the purposes of terror on December 22, 2001. In 2006, a plot to explode multiple trans-atlantic airliners was thwarted which is the reason we can't bring liquids on airplanes anymore. The most recent act of terror at the time of this writing occurred on February 18, 2010 when Joseph Stack crashed his small plane into the IRS building in Austin, Texas. These are the reported incidents. One only has to watch the news to see that even if some terror group from the mountains of Pakistan even hints it will do something, we, as a nation, run in fear. Or stated another way, “...keep fleeing even when no one is pursuing you.”

The second consequence listed is:

I'll break your mighty pride. I'll make the heavens to be like iron and the ground like bronze. Your strength will be spent in vain, because your land won't yield its produce and the trees of the land won't yield its fruit.

⁸ A tale of two trends: Tuberculosis and Typhoid fever. Journal of Community Health. Vol. 20, no. 6. Dec 1995. Human Sciences Press, Inc. ISSN: 0094-5145 (print) 1573-3610 (online)

For the last decade there have been record droughts all across the United States. Pop culture will have you believe it is the result of man-made worldwide climate change. I submit that it may be man-made, but not in the way that the pundits will have you believe. Regardless of the method of causing the drought, it is here. Research by Eric deCarbonnel shows a catastrophic fall in food production across the globe in 2009 alone⁹.

The third and following consequences read as follows,

I'll send the wild beasts against you from the open country to deprive you of your children, destroy your cattle, and decrease your number so that your roads become desolate.

I'll bring the sword against you to execute the vengeance of my covenant. When you gather in your cities, I'll send a pestilence. As a result, you'll be delivered into the control of your enemies.

“When I destroy the source of your bread, ten women will bake bread in one oven. Then they'll return back your bread by weight. You'll eat but won't be satisfied.

I'll oppose you with vicious rage. Indeed, I myself will punish you seven fold on account of your sins. At that time you'll eat the flesh of your sons and you'll eat the flesh of your daughters.

“I'll destroy your high places and cut down your sun-pillars. Then I'll cast your dead bodies on top of the bodies of your idols.

“I'll loathe you. I'll lay your cities to waste and destroy your sanctuaries so I don't have to smell the scent of your soothing odors.

“I'll make the land so desolate that your enemies who live in it will be astonished.”

“I'll scatter you among the nations and draw the sword after you so that your land becomes desolate and your towns become ruins.

“Then the land will finally be pleased with its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate while you are in the land of your enemies. At that time the land will rest and take its Sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate, it will have rest that it will not have had during your Sabbaths when you were living in it.

“As for the remnants among you, I'll bring despair in their hearts in the land of their enemies so that even the sound of a blown leaf will chase them and they flee as though pursued by the sword and fall when no one is

⁹ Source: Catastrophic Fall in 2009 Global Food Production by Eric deCarbonnel
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=12252>

pursuing. They'll stumble over each other as though fleeing before the sword, even though no one is pursuing.

“You won't have power to resist your enemies. You'll perish among the nations and the land of your enemies will consume you.

The remnants among you will waste away on account of their iniquity in the land of your enemies. Indeed, they'll also waste away on account of the iniquities of their ancestors with them.

It seems clear to me that we are definitely within the second stage of these listed consequences if not into the third. The rest of the list does not get any better for us.

Hope of National Salvation

There is hope, however. At each stage, God begins with a qualifier. Leviticus 26:14 reads, “But if you won't listen to me and obey all these commands...”. Just prior to the second consequence God says, “If despite all of this you still don't listen to me ...”¹⁰. God begins the next statement of consequence with ““If you live life contrary to me and remain unwilling to listen to me...”¹¹. Again, God gives a qualifier to the next phase of consequences when he says, “If despite these things you will don't return to me, but live life contrary to me,...”¹². Finally, before the last set of consequences is spelled out, God once again says, “If after all of this time you don't listen to me, but instead live life contrary to me,...”¹³. At each step along the fall, Israel and by extension any nation, has an opportunity to repent and turn back. Even after the entire list of consequences is complete, God offers hope to Israel beginning in Leviticus 26:40. So too, is there hope for us. Read the books of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah. In each you will see a case where the people prayed to God to repent of their own sins as well as those of their nation. God keeps his promises and so restored Israel just as He said he would. As individuals we must do our part to follow God so that as a nation we follow God. God is patient and gracious, but He is also just and iniquity cannot go unpunished forever.

Promise of Personal Salvation

I would be remiss if I did not point out that even if our nation continues to fall away from His word there is still hope of salvation for the individual. Paul writes to the Galatians a very good summary of God's plan of salvation.

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age,

¹⁰ Leviticus 26:18 (ISV)

¹¹ Leviticus 26:21 (ISV)

¹² Leviticus 26:23 (ISV)

¹³ Leviticus 26:27 (ISV)

according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Galatians 1:3-5 (ISV)

This is the only way to fully pay for our sinful nature. Since no man is without sin, Jesus paid that price for all of us and so it is through Him that we can have salvation and life through the coming age.

Addendum:

There is a movement afoot that is trying to establish that the founders of this nation were not religiously inclined at all. I think I have established otherwise, however, even if it were the case that the shapers of our constitution and laws did not have a Christian basis for their work. That does not absolve us as a nation of our responsibility to our creator.

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