

"Unto the Third and Fourth Generation of them that hate Me..."

*I used to be involved in a ministry devoted to bringing those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or those who would like to, out of a context of "bondage". This is best described as a situation where they feel bound-up by rules, regulations, and other peoples' **"Thus saith the Lord"** - in respect of particular activities, thought processes and so on - without there being justifiable scriptural backing to what they say.*

It should be pointed out that there are many situations where there is merit in reading what scripture actually says, and seeking corroboration from other scriptures, but none being taken one verse at a time from here, there, and everywhere, in the way of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Doctrines stated by some church denominations may also be found to be **"suss"** by such research, and it is well to recognise that our salvation is personal, and when each of us stands at the judgement bar, pleas of **"sorry, I was told by..."** will be inadmissible. The ministry I was part of is a vehicle which helps us to see that each of us can be set free from dictatorial direction that is unscriptural, yet keeping to a no-compromise attitude towards what actually is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The particular scripture as the top of the page is often quoted by those who wish to make significance of the concept that a parental involvement in the occult, not only can, but will have an onward-reaching effect upon that person's children. If that person was involved in Freemasonry, they say that this portion of the "Decalogue" or Ten Commandments **PROMISES** that considerable problems will be part of all of that person's children's heritage, and while to some this may sound far-fetched, please be assured that even if you are unaware of that organisation's roots, there is ample proof if one is prepared to go looking, that the lower degrees (below the 30th) have the true nature and worship of the craft deliberately hidden, being pure and unadulterated Luciferian to the 30th, 31st, 32nd and 33rd degrees.

This is not the place to examine the Luciferian content of Freemasonry. It is, however, the place to look at a pseudo-Christian doctrine based upon one scripture which I believe is taken out of context.

Be that all as it may, let me make some comment about this scripture that I believe they quote out of context. In Exodus 20, we read...

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Taken on its own, one has to admit that it sounds as though this scripture says what they say it does. However, I believe that we should examine what the teachers of the "Law" actually taught. Let us remember that while much of the Old Testament may have been "done away with", that does not mean that it should be ignored. Rather, I feel, that it should be viewed in context. If it were done away with, why would we still use the prophetic scripture it contains?

We should remember that much of the New Testament is attributed to the Apostle Paul, Paulus in Roman language, Sha'ul in Hebrew. He described himself as "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" - he was a Pharisee, extremely well read in the law, the Prophets, and the Writings. He knew rabbinical interpretation backwards, and studied under Gamaliel. It was to him that the Sanhedrin turned and placed full authority to purge the planet of Christianity prior to his miraculous conversion. Nobody at that time, in all probability, knew about Judaism better. Yet nowhere in his writings is anything said about anyone being responsible for someone else's sins, but only their own sins.

Let us examine what Christ had to say. About the only spot that one can identify with this line of thought is the somewhat obscure remark He made, recorded by John, where in chapter 9 he wrote

- 1 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*
- 2 *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, **who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?***
- 3 *Jesus answered, **Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents:** but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*
- 4 *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*
- 5 *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*
- 6 *When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,*
- 7 *And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.*

It looks to me as though nothing was said or written in the New Testament that would support this line of thought. It might make sense, therefore, to read a Jewish commentary on the section of Exodus we are looking at, so I quote here from the excellent commentary on the Pentateuch by Dr. J.H. Hertz in 1936. Dr Hertz was Chief Rabbi of the British Empire at that time, and the copy I have is the 12th impression (1969) of the 2nd edition (1937) which contains the Hebrew text, the Version of the Holy Scriptures issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America (1917), and the commentary, almost an interlinear style reference. I quote here...

***visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children...** The Torah does not teach here or elsewhere that the sins of the guilty fathers shall be visited upon their innocent children. **The soul that sinneth it shall die** proclaims the Prophet Ezekiel. [the whole of Ezekiel chapter 18 is worth reading in this context]. And in the administration of justice by the state [in biblical times] the Torah distinctly lays down, **'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin'** (Deut xxix, 16). However, human experience all too plainly teaches the moral interdependence of parents and children. The bad example set by a father frequently corrupts those that come after him. His most dreadful bequest to his children is not a liability to punishment, but a liability to the commission of fresh offences...*

Another translation is, '**remembering** the sins of the fathers unto the children'; i.e. God **remembers** the sins of the fathers when about to punish the children. He distinguishes between the moral responsibility which falls exclusively upon the sinful parents, and the natural consequences and predisposition to sin, inherited by the descendants. He takes into account the evil environment and influence. He therefore tempers justice with mercy; and He does so to the third and fourth generation.

.....of them that hate Me. The rabbis refer these words to the children. The sins of the fathers will be visited upon them only if they too transgress God's commandments.

6. unto the thousandth generation. Contrast the narrow limits.....within which the sin is visited, with the thousand generations that His mercy is shown to those who love God and keep his commandments...

It is my understanding that Rabbinical interpretation of the Scriptures was established during the Babylonian captivity, several centuries before the Christian era, and did not change subsequently except perhaps in minor aspects. If God is unchangeable, why in the late 20th Century would (or could) there be a situation arise where **He would alter his attitude towards those who have not sinned in themselves**, when His attitude taught by the Lord Jesus Christ (and Christ's apostles) confirms His previous attitude as given to Moses in this respect? I am aware it is problematical to compare the old and new in this way, but I believe that here we have something to learn. It can be as dangerous to add doctrines based on single scriptures as it is to add scriptures to the complete canon, in the way that (for example) Mormons have done with their extra writings. Extra writings are great when they amplify what is already there. If, however, they result in changed scripture, then as is said in nautical circles, "You are standing into danger" - not just a passive situation where you are in danger, but where you have specifically and deliberately placed yourself in that situation.

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