

THE RECOVERY OF PARENTING

During the month of September, we have been studying a special series of lessons on parenting.

The national deterioration of the family (DI#3) does not occur over night. It is part of a gradual moral and spiritual decline of all four divine institutions within the nation.

In this moral and spiritual national decline, parenting skills are ignored and lost. The children suffer for it at the time and the nation suffers for it later. According to the scriptures this deterioration of the family will continue until those who were once loving and caring parents resort to "eating their children"! (Lev.26: 27-39; Deut.28: 53-57).

The church of Jesus Christ has a great opportunity today to take the lead in ministering to hurting families and especially hurting children. Jesus Himself declared: "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt.18:6)

Lev.26: 14-46 characterizes the five cycles by this national decline, "If after all this you will not listen to Me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over (Lev.26: 18,21,24,28). These people were characterized by "uncircumcised hearts" (Lev.26:41; Acts 7:51).

Recovery of parenting from divine discipline involved "if they confess their iniquity" and "if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land." (Lev.26:40-42)

NOTE: At the time of the prophetic birth of John the Baptizer, the priest-nation of Israel was under the fourth of the five cycles of divine discipline (Lev.26 and Deut.28).

This lesson will study FOUR aspects of how Parents can Recover from a moral and spiritual declining nation

1. In the midst of a morally and spiritually declining nation, God sent forth the long awaited messianic prophet (JB) to announce the coming of His Son into the world (Luke 1:8-17).

"But when the fulness (pleroma) [that of which a thing is full] of the time (tou chronos) [an important historical date for an occurrence] came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law." (Gal.4:4)

Jesus was born under the fourth out of five cycles of divine discipline on the priest-nation of Israel. **He was to be a bright light to a nation in spiritual and moral darkness** – "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. He came for a witness, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." (John 1:4-9)

The Christian church in the world is described - "For you were formerly darkness, but now **you are light in the Lord**; walk as children of light." (Eph.4:8; Acts 26:18)

2. God sent the angel Gabriel to prepare the parental hearts of Zechariah and Elizabeth for the birth of the ministry of JB.

Notice the difference between the YOU part (Luke 1:13-14) and HE part of Gabriel's message (1:15-17).

Zech and Liz were spiritual mature and grace-oriented believers in midst of a morally and spiritually declining nation. They probably felt that they could do a better job of raising a child, even though they didn't have one, than the majority of parents around them. Their hearts probably ached because of the neglect, abandonment and child abuse occurring throughout the declining nation – “But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.” (Luke 1:17)

Yet this was the “fulness of time” in the Plan of God for Zech and Eliz. Make sure your eyes are on the Plan of God and not on the conditions surrounding you so that you don't miss your “fulness of time.”

This is an even greater moment than a “time to” or “an appointed time for” as stated in Ecclesiastes Ch 3.

3. Gabriel outlined the importance of JB's four-fold ministry as the forerunner of Messiah before his birth (Luke 1:15-17)

Note the four future indicatives and the two aorist infinitives:

Future Indicatives

- He will be (eimi / f.a.ind) great in the sight of the Lord and he will drink no wine or liquor.
- He will be filled (pimpliemi / f.p.ind) with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb.
- He will turn back (**epistrepho** / f.a.ind) many of the **sons of Israel** to the Lord their God.
- He will go as a forerunner (proerchomai / f.a.ind) before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah

Two Aorist Infinitives

- To turn the hearts of the fathers back (**epistrepho** / a.a.infin) to the **children and the disobedient** (apeithes)
- To the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready (hetoimai / a.a.infin) **a people** prepared for the Lord.

Note the Greek word **epistrepho** "turn back", which is the idea of recovery, is used twice. It is used once for the son of Israel and the other time for parents and children of the nation of Israel.

4. One important ministry of JB as the messianic forerunner was directed towards DI#3 (family). It was ministering to both the parents and the children.

This is a quotation from Malachi 4:6 – “And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.” (NAS)

This two-fold ministry of the first (epistrepho / a.a.infin) [a divine purpose] was “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (1:15-17)

Note that “to make ready (hetoimai) is the second a.a.infin and the resulting divine purpose.

Today the church's ministry is greater than JB's – “He (Jesus Christ) must become greater; and I (JB) must become less.” (John 3:30)

Because of the Doctrine of Positional Truth every member of the Body of Christ is greater because of our union with Jesus Christ (2 Cor.5: 17; Gal.3: 27-28).

Therefore we of DSBC have a great commission and opportunity to minister to those hurting children and families throughout our community, state and nation through our church teaching, summer camps, marriage conferences and outreach ministries.