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DOCTRINE OF THE FOUR GENERATION CURSE (R. B. Thieme, Jr. notes)

A. Introduction.

1. This is an important principle in the interpretation of history from the divine viewpoint.
2. Illustrations of this principle from modern history include the French revolution and Bolshevik revolution.
3. This doctrine will explain any future national suffering, and the reason for the administration of the cycles of discipline to a client nation.

B. Old Testament References and Background.

1. After 400 years of slavery, the Jews were destined to become the first client nation to God under the great leadership of Moses. But to warn against making bad decisions as a free people, God gave Moses information regarding the four generation curse. This information explains why problems continue and become worse from one generation to another.
2. Ex 20:4-5 is the first statement on this subject as a part of the decalogue. Ex 20:4-5, "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters below. You will not bow down to them or be caused to serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sins of their fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who despise Me."
 - a. This passage is a warning against idolatry, practiced by the vigorous and powerful Canaanite giants occupying the land. Part of their power came from demonism related to idolatry.
 - b. The Ten Commandments were, in effect, the Constitution for Israel, designed to help these former slaves establish the concept of freedom in their new nation. The mandates are designed for the protection of freedom.
3. This curse does not apply to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ or to any establishment-oriented unbeliever. Hating God refers to rejection of Jesus Christ. So this curse never applies to the believer unless he spends his life in the cosmic system. Negative volition is the basis of culpability; becoming a believer breaks this four generation curse principle.
4. Ex 20:6 adds comfort to this curse, "But showing mercy to thousands who love Me and guard My mandates." Even in the fifth cycle of discipline, God always shows mercy to those who live their spiritual life in accordance with God's plan for their life. No disaster is greater than the Bible doctrine in your soul.
5. Deut 5:8-10 is the second statement of this curse, and is identical to Ex 20:4-6. Repetition is for inculcation, so that the rate of learning will exceed the rate of forgetting.
6. The third statement of this curse is Ex 34:6-7. "Then the Lord passed in front of him [Moses] and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in mercy and truth, guarding His

mercy for thousands [believers], and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the grand children to the third and fourth generation.”

- a. After three or four generations, the curse completely burns itself out and there is always a new start after four generations who have been under this curse. This curse is never given where people respond to grace.
 - b. The abuse of parents creates environmental handicaps which are passed on to their children. The children, therefore, cannot handle their own flaws and problems because of the environmental handicaps.
 - c. These flaws are never understood or addressed because the people involved are reacting to the abuse and the failure of their parents.
7. The fourth statement is given in Num 14:18. “The Lord is slow to anger, and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin, but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.” Each generation is responsible for its own iniquity which is passed on culturally from one generation to the next.
8. Characteristics of the four generations.
- a. There are great differences between the first and fourth generations.
 - i. The culture changes.
 - ii. The motivation of people changes.
 - iii. People’s values change.
 - b. Juvenile crime increases in each generation. Life is cheap in the fourth generation.
 - c. Idolatry occurs in the third and fourth generations.
- C. Mechanics of the Four Generation Curse, Prov 30:11-14.
1. The first generation of Jews rejected human authority.
 - a. The four generation curse always begins when people reject legitimate authority, and it always begins in the home.
 - b. Though the Jews were given Moses, the greatest human authority ever given to a people by God, the Jews just out of slavery could only think of their freedom. Therefore, they rejected Moses’ authority, associating authority with the slave master.
 - c. When people are first emancipated from slavery, they’re prone to thinking that freedom means license to do anything, even to break laws.
 2. God’s system for a nation calls for the balance of freedom and authority, which is the basis for the laws of divine establishment.
 - a. Freedom without authority is anarchy; authority without freedom is tyranny. Both are wrong.
 - b. Our protection from enemies without is the authority of the military. Our protection from enemies within is the police force and the judge. So it takes authority systems to protect your freedom.

3. Your freedom as a human being does not become operative until after you leave home. Your parents are your first lesson of authority, as authorized by divine institution number three, the family. This is why all national suffering is related to the family, and why the sins of the father are visited on the son.
 - a. We're born under the authority of parents, because until we learn to submit to authority, we suffer in life under the law of volitional responsibility. All seeming advantages in life are lost if one rejects authority.
 - b. So rejection of authority is the most prominent cause for suffering in life. Divine institution number one is your free will, and you choose to accept or reject authority from very early in life.
 - c. Authority is necessary for the very function of life. You never enjoy your freedom or have capacity for freedom until you understand and accept authority.
4. The first generation of a four generation curse will reject authority beginning in the home, Prov 30:11, "A generation who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers."
 - a. People reject the first basic authority of parents because they want to do what others do.
 - b. The greatest suffering in life comes from rejection of parental authority. The key to the stability of any nation is the home.
 - c. You must learn obedience before you have capacity to use freedom. All capacities in life start with capacity for authority. No one learns how to live until they can identify and respect authority, regardless of the person in authority.
 - d. Arrogance begins with rejection of authority. Satan's arrogance began by the rejection of God's authority in eternity past.
5. Verse 12 speaks of the parents who teach their children self-righteous arrogance and consequent hypocrisy in the second generation. "A generation who are pure in their own eyes, and yet they are not cleansed from their filth." During this second generation, there is the intensification of self-righteous arrogance. This is found in "Christian" homes where there is tremendous legalism and blind arrogance.
6. Verse 13 describes the third generation as having locked-in arrogance. "A generation whose eyes are so arrogant that their eyelids are raised in arrogance."
7. Verse 14 describes the fourth generation, "A generation whose teeth are swords, and whose jaws are set like knives."
 - a. This is the generation of inordinate ambition and lust for power.
 - b. We see something of this today in believers who use violence in their crusader arrogance against such things as abortion. Christian leadership today is advocating rebellion against government, civil disobedience, and violence. These are signs that we're in the fourth generation.
8. In the first generation you reject authority, in the second generation you have a self-righteous justification for arrogance. As a result, the third generation

has locked-in arrogance, and the fourth generation has inordinate ambition and lust for power. The fourth generation is the most corrupt of all, having accumulated all the sins of the past three generations plus their own.

9. Everyone wants power, lusting for everything they want. The fourth generation gets everything by hypocrisy; i.e., being the nice guy, doing anything to get what they want.
10. Our first generation was during World War I during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson. The second generation was during the Depression. The third generation was the Vietnam generation. We're now in the fourth generation, especially among young people. This is a very serious problem, since the fourth generation can cause the destruction of our client nation under the five cycles of discipline.

D. Law of Culpability.

1. You are not in the four generation curse unless you are culpable. Culpability is always based on volition, the volition of each individual in any generation of human history. You are only responsible for your own sins and not the sins of your parents. The four generation curse never exists except where the children of the fourth generation commit the sins of their parents in the third generation.
 - a. Culpability is liability for divine punishment or discipline from the supreme court of heaven. God holds you responsible for your sins.
 - b. Culpability is based on the volition of each person in each generation regarding the sins of their parents.
 - c. No one is culpable unless they repeat the sins of their parents from their own volition or follow the volition of other apostates in their own generation.
2. Deut 24:16, "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; everyone will be put to death for his own sin."
3. Only those children who react to child abuse or who learn from their parents the evil of their parents and become culpable are involved in the four generation curse. Apart from one's own culpability no one is under the four generation curse. The sins of the parents have to be repeated in the children of the next generation for culpability and punitive action to be administered. Though you have to sin for yourself to be culpable, the point is that you are influenced. You have a tendency to repeat the sins of your parents, i.e., the arrogance, the vanity, and the mental attitude sins. Choosing to repeat these sins from your own volition results in passing these down to the fourth generation, where all hell breaks loose in revolution, violence, and the destruction of a nation.
4. Apart from your own culpability, no one is under the fourth generation curse. It can be broken in any generation. The simplest way to break the curse is by faith in Christ and the subsequent execution of the protocol plan of God.
5. The sins of the father have to be repeated in the next generation for culpability and punitive action to be administered from God.

6. Otherwise, where there is no culpability, the law of grace applies. Deut 7:9, “Know, therefore, that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God guarding the covenant and His mercy to the thousandth generation of those who love Him and keep His mandates.” Salvation by grace through faith breaks this curse every time for the individual. This verse particularly refers to reaching personal love for God and spiritual self-esteem.
 7. Ps 100:5, “For the Lord is good, and His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.” The word “good” refers to God’s perfect essence. God deals personally with those who break the four generation curse.
 8. Jer 31:29-30 says God only visits the sins of the parents on the children of those who reject or disobey Him.
- E. The ultimate solution to the four generation curse is Bible doctrine.
1. Deut 6:4-9, SHAMA ISRAEL, ADONAI ELOHENU, ADONAI ECHAD. This is translated, “Listen [hear], O Israel, Jesus Christ is our God, Jesus Christ is unique.” This verse emphasizes the importance of the client nation providing freedom for people to make positive or negative decisions toward the Gospel and doctrine. This verse defines the necessary ingredients for a client nation.
 - a. The qal imperative of SHAMA means to be motivated to listen and hear. A client nation must have a people who have humility and are willing to learn Bible doctrine. This teachability overflows to every area in life.
 - b. ADONAI ELOHENU, “the Lord is our God,” means that as goes the believers, so goes the nation. The size of the pivot determines the prosperity of the nation. Nothing else really counts. No client nation is ever conquered by another nation; it can only go down by destroying itself.
 - c. ADONAI ECHAD, “the Lord is unique,” means that believers must be motivated to advance to spiritual maturity whether in the ritual plan of God during the Old Testament or in the protocol plan of God during the Church Age. Though the principles of spiritual advance are similar in both dispensations, there are major differences. One is that Israel had visible historical impact under the ritual plan of God; but in the Church Age, the believer is to have invisible historical impact by executing the protocol plan of God.
 2. Deut 6:5 defines the motivation necessary to advance spiritually. “Love the Lord your God with all your right lobe and with all of your soul and with all of your strength [power—the three stages of the adult spiritual life].” Having all the doctrine you can get into your stream of consciousness is love for God. This is harmonious rapport with God, which is the spiritual life.
 3. Deut 6:6-7, “These words [doctrines] which I am commanding you today shall be in your hearts [stream of consciousness]; you will teach [inculcate] them to your children and shall talk about them: when you sit in your home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, when you get up in the morning [before you go to bed and when you wake up].” The four generation

curse is broken by salvation through faith in Christ plus perception and metabolization of doctrine by parents teaching children the spiritual life. You teach by repetition—inculcation. 4. Deut 6:9, “Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.” 5. See also Deut 7:9; Ps 100:5; Jer 31:15-16.

F. The Problem of Incurrigible Children.

1. In Deut 21, God taught Moses the hard way to break the four generation curse, which is the solution for the incurrigible. Deut 21:18-21, “If a parent has a stubborn and rebellious son [incurrigible teenager, incapable of being corrected, unmanageable] who does not obey his father and mother, consequently, he will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall seize him and bring him before the judges in the court of his town. They shall testify to the judges, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey us; he is immoral and a drunkard.’ Then all the men in the town will take him out and stone him to death. You must purge evil from among you; all Israel will hear it and be restrained.” Capital punishment restrains evil; capital punishment restrains crime.
2. To perpetuate the client nation, the four generation curse must be broken either through evangelism and doctrinal teaching or through the punishment of the incurrigible juvenile delinquents.
3. In every generation, there is always a certain number of young people whose arrogance and rejection of authority results in immoral behavior, e.g., rape, drug addiction, burglary, arson, violence, etc. Crime is one of the greatest dangers to freedom. If crime is not controlled by the judicial system, your freedom is gone.
4. One preventative solution is to teach your children when they are young, as taught in Deut 11:18-21, “You will inculcate these doctrines of Mine in your right lobes and minds. Tie them as notes on your hands, and as training aids tie them around your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit down at home, when you travel, before you go to bed, and when you wake up. Write these on the door frames of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord promised to give to your ancestors, as long as the heavens remain above the earth.”
 - a. Parents are to teach doctrine to the child’s heart (stream of consciousness)—the spiritual understanding.
 - b. Parents are to teach doctrine to the child’s mind—the academic understanding.
 - c. “That your days may be many” is an idiom for prosperity.
5. The key to the perpetuation of the client nation is always related to the next generation of young people—whether or not they receive proper training in authority orientation, are evangelized, grow in grace, and form a pivot.

G. The Use of Children to Justify Negative Volition to Doctrine.

1. Children have often been used by parents as justification for their own negative volition toward God’s will and God’s plan.

2. Two generations of Jews were destroyed as a result of the four generation curse: the Exodus generation, and the generation captured by the Babylonians. In each case, the loser generation had rejected Bible doctrine and used their children as an excuse for their apostasy and failure. And in each case, the children who were used as an excuse turned out far better than their parents, and they broke the four generation curse.
3. The failure of the Exodus generation is found in Num 13.
 - a. Verses 1-25 describe the reconnaissance team sent out by Moses to determine the best way to capture the land. The team returned with two different opinions.
 - b. Their joint report, that the land was fantastic, is given in verses 27-29.
 - c. Verse 30 is the minority report from Caleb and Joshua. Caleb silenced the people who were already upset from hearing that giants inhabited the land. Num 13:30, "Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and spoke, 'We should by all means invade the land and take possession of it, for we will definitely overcome it.'" Caleb had mixed the promises of God with his faith. He looked at the land of Canaan from the divine viewpoint. He was in harmonious rapport with God.
 - d. Verse 31-33 is the majority report. Num 13:31-33, "But the men who had gone on the mission with him said, 'We cannot attack these people, for they are stronger than we are.' So they disseminated a bad report to the Israelites about the land they had explored, saying, "...There also we saw the giants.'" The carnal believer looks at the problem. They were frightened by the giants; they were in a state of emotional revolt of the soul.
4. Num 14:1-4 is the failure of the first generation, the beginning of a four generation curse, but which was cut off in the next generation. "That night all the people stayed up all night and screamed; consequently, they cried all night [expression of their negative volition and frustration]. And all Israel grumbled [griped] against Moses and Aaron, and the entire congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if we had only died in this desert! And now, why is the Lord bringing us into this land to be killed by the sword? And our wives and children will be taken as plunder? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt [in slavery]?' So they said to each other [worked each other up], 'We will elect a new leader and go back to Egypt.'"
5. The doctrinal viewpoint is given in Num 14:6-10, represented again by Joshua and Caleb. Part of the message in verse 9, "Do not rebel against the Lord; do not fear the people of the land. We will eat them up [their protection is gone]. The Lord is with us; do not be afraid of them." Verse 10 is the reaction of the people, "But the congregation said, 'Let's stone them.'"
6. The pardon of the Exodus generation through the intercession of Moses is found in Num 14:20-23, "Therefore the Lord answered, 'I have pardoned them on the basis of your word [the intercession of Moses]; nevertheless, as surely as I live, and as surely as the glory of the Lord shall fill all the earth

none of the men who have seen My glory and My miraculous signs which I have performed in Egypt and in the desert, where they tested Me ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I promised to them with an oath to their fathers, nor shall any of those who despised Me see it.” God had given them the most gracious pardon in all of human history. But no sooner were they pardoned and forgiven and they were off again into sinning. The continued sinning until they died the sin unto death. Despising the Lord means failure to fulfill the spiritual life given by the Lord. The pardon of the Exodus generation had no impact on their scar tissue of the soul.

7. Num 14:29-34 is the statement of God’s discipline to the first generation. “In this desert, your bodies will fall, every one of you, twenty years old or more, who was counted in the census and who has grumbled [complained] against Me. Not one of you will enter the land, except Caleb and Joshua. As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land that you have rejected. But you, your bodies [corpses] will fall in this desert. Your children during this time will be shepherds, here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness until your corpses lie in the desert. For forty years, one year for each of the forty days you explored the land, you will suffer for your sins, and you will know what it is to have Me against you.”
 - a. The second generation would not only go into the land and conquer it, but they would enjoy it! The difference between the first and second generation was attitude toward Bible doctrine. So the four generation curse was broken in the second generation.
 - b. God used the suffering experienced by the second generation to provide for them providential preventative suffering, in order to strengthen their spiritual self-esteem so that when they marched into the land, they would form a strong pivot.
 - c. So this was a combination of two categories of suffering, both the law of volitional responsibility and divine discipline. They had self-induced misery and divine discipline.

H. Historical Illustration from the New Testament.

1. In the New Testament, there is one great illustration of the four generation curse, found in Mt 2:14ff, Matt 14, and Acts 12, 24, and 25. It’s the story of a half Jewish and half Arab family.
2. Its first generation was that of Herod the Great. Herod had every opportunity for salvation, but he rejected Christ as Savior. Herod killed three of his own sons, forty five members of the Sanhedrin, and all the children in Bethlehem, Matt 2. God used Herod to postpone the Jewish revolt against Rome for 100 years.
3. Herod the Great was followed by his son, Antipas the Fox, Matt 14, representing the second generation under the curse. He took his wife, Herodius, the wife of his uncle Philip, from the third generation. Antipas had the greatest opportunity to believe in Christ, Lk 23:4-12. He died in misery and poverty.

4. The third generation was Herod Agrippa I, mentioned in Acts 12. He also rejected Christ for salvation and was responsible for the martyrdom of James.
 5. The fourth generation was represented by three of the great-grandchildren of Herod: Herod Agrippa II, and his sisters Bernice and Drucilla. All three heard the preaching of the Apostle Paul, and all three rejected it. Acts 24-25 is the story of Felix and his wife Drucilla, the sister of Herod Agrippa II. Bernice became the mistress of the emperor Titus.
 6. So in each generation, there was culpability.
- I. In the millennium, the New Covenant to Israel will break the curse.
1. Jeremiah 11 delineates the old covenant, the Mosaic Law, which was basis of freedom. But that was rejected so that the Jews went back into slavery.
 2. In Jeremiah's day, the four generation curse on idolatry reached its peak. Therefore, the fifth cycle of discipline was administered, Jer 16:10-13.
 3. So in Jer 31, Jeremiah looks way out ahead to the Millennium, where he sees Christ returning to the earth and perfect environment. There he sees the New Covenant, which will give to the world the greatest freedom it has ever known.
 4. Therefore, maximum knowledge of doctrine in the Millennium will break the four generation curse under the function of the New Covenant to Israel, Jer 31:29-34.

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