DECONSTRUCTION by Andy Diestelkamp

*Deconstruction* is likely something you have heard of; but perhaps you are not certain you understand what is meant by it. Join the club! Originally, it was the idea of literally taking something apart, but in more modern times it has been used philosophically to refer to a process of challenging assumptions about what is true or real.

In its more literal application, we can see that deconstruction could be important. In order to build something solid where something inferior already exists, it first requires some tearing down. The same could also be true of ideas or beliefs or practices. Jesus was involved in a kind of deconstruction when He challenged the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees of His day.

Whatever someone might mean by the term *deconstruction*, it is important to consider one’s motives. For some, deconstruction is a prideful pastime that glories in casting doubt upon anything cherished or otherwise accepted. It can also be a form of rebellion that delights in something akin to intellectual arson. It might be done for no other reason than to watch something burn down. Some deconstructionists are nothing more than spiritual pyromaniacs who have nothing of substance to offer after the smoke clears.

Deconstruction might be motivated by accurate knowledge but still exercised without love. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies (1 Cor. 8:1). When we know something that others don’t, there is an inclination to want to share it with others. This can be good if it is for the purpose of improving and strengthening others. However, too often, it is more about the flexing of intellectual muscle with little or no regard for the welfare of those who are deemed ignorant.

However, Jesus’ deconstruction was not of these varieties. Certainly, there were concepts and traditions in Jesus’ day which needed to be taken apart; but the purpose of tearing them down was to reconstruct something sound.

Good deconstruction is not indiscriminate. It separates the wheat from the weeds rather than burning the entire field (cf. Mt. 13:30). Deconstruction is not an end. It is a means to a better structure of understanding.

Granted, the need for deconstruction is not always so evident to those who treasure their traditions or the status quo. When Jesus came into this world, He was opposed by those whose messianic expectations He did not meet. For example, it seems that some were charging Jesus with seeking “to destroy the Law or the Prophets” because He challenged what they had “heard that it was said to those of old” (Mt. 5:17-48). Jesus clarified that He “did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

Jesus’ deconstruction of the misconceptions and misapplications of the Law of Moses did not constitute a trashing of the Law. Indeed, after Jesus was killed for teaching these things, He defeated death and arose to remind His disciples of what He had taught them previously. “That all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Lk. 24:44).

Nevertheless, in pointing to Himself as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, Jesus *did* render the Sinai covenant obsolete (cf. Heb. 8:7-13). Undoubtedly, from the perspective of most Jews, this was effectively destructive. Yet this deconstruction was essential if Jesus was going to serve as a high priest (cf. Heb. 2:14-3:1; 4:14-5:11; 7:1-28) Who would reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to their Creator and to one another in one body.

The Jewish temple in Jerusalem made with hands *was* literallydestroyed (as Jesus said it would be - Mt. 24), and in a figurative sense “heaven and earth” *did* pass away (from a Jewish perspective). The middle wall of division *was* broken down. The law of commandments that created such enmity *was* abolished in Jesus’ crucifixion (Eph 2:14,15).

Yet, this was not mere deconstruction on Jesus’ part. It was the fulfillment of an eternal plan “to create in Himself one new man … that He might reconcile [Jew and Gentile] to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity” (vv 15,16). Now we are “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (vv 20-22).

None of this could have happened without some kind of deconstruction. Certainly, we must beware of those who seek to destroy what is true and righteous. Yet, we must also humbly acknowledge that through the years many things have been constructed by men which (through some form of deconstruction) have been shown not to be of God. Those with such knowledge need to deconstruct in love.

Conversely, we may grow weary of having our own beliefs challenged and our assumptions questioned. Yet, unless we want to repeat the failures of the generations of the past, we must “test everything; hold fast what is good” (1 Thes. 5:21) and “let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good” (Rom. 12:9). Let us be a noble people whose ears and hearts are open and will compare what we hear with the Scriptures (cf. Ac. 17:11). Let us be prepared to deconstruct our ideas and traditions so our lives can be reconstructed according to the will of God.