

Exod 03-12-14b

We resume and continue our worship for our second session this morning, having looked at our scripture reading out of Isaiah chapter 3, and then returned to our study of the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20. We have noted that there are ten of these words. The Bible in two or three places calls them the ten words, the ten matters, the ten basic issues that are going to be the definition of the constitution, if you will, of the nation of Israel.

So, we need to understand a little bit about what they mean, how they pertain, and one of the helpful things is to determine what their association is. I believe that there are five on the first table and five on the second. One of the reasons is the first five, each of them is stamped with the name of God, is explained and is tied to something God is or something God does.

The second set, we will see, are more in the realm of mankind. What is curious and what has caused some consternation to those who have gone before me and have observed this thing is that the fifth commandment seems to be a straddler. God is mentioned there, but it is talking about father and mother, and wouldn't this be one of the ones that pertains to human life in the same way that respecting other people's marriages and property and lives and so on would be? Well, to solve this mystery for ourselves, it would be helpful to look at what the Word of God has to say about honoring father and mother.

Why does God consider this so important that He puts it right up there, juxtaposed with respect for Him, for His name, for not reducing Him to an image, and so on? Well, we begin by taking a look at the next chapter in Exodus. Turn just a page forward to Exodus chapter 21, verse 15. We'll be coming up on this, but it pertains now.

This is a section of laws concerning violence in the land, in the nation. It begins in verse 12. He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.

However, if he did not lie in wait, in other words, there was no premeditation, God delivered him into His hand. I will appoint for you a place where you may flee. We'll be seeing the cities of refuge later on.

But, verse 14, if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from my altar that he may die. Why would he be at the altar? It's sanctuary, trying to achieve refuge. David's nephew, Joab, tried to get mercy at the altar, clinging to the horns of the altar.

This happens several times. Now look at verse 15. And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

He who kidnaps a man and sells him or is found in his hands shall surely be put to death. Right in between kidnapping for the purpose of slavery and premeditated murder, you have slapping your father or mother, striking in any way. It doesn't say strike so that they die.

It says a son or daughter who strikes their father or mother. This is a death penalty offense. Does this reinforce the idea that God considers honor for father and mother important? Important enough to put on His table of the law? Look at verse 17.

He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. What did we see in Isaiah chapter 3? God was evaluating what Israelites did with their tongue and what they did with their hands. Remember that? What they say and what they do.

He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. This is the doubling of the Hebrew verb mut. It's similar to what was said in the garden in the day that you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Dying thou shalt die. That's the same level of intensity in this command. Now, like many other things in our society and in our culture, there is a frivolity and a lightness and a casual attitude about marriage, about family, about respect for elders, about respect for authority.

It is seen to be of little importance by most people. Well, the Word of God is here to correct, rebuke, and instruct us in righteousness. And I don't care what kind of person a father or mother is.

The Bible does not say respect or honor good fathers and mothers. Respect and honor the nice ones. Respect and honor them as long as they conform to some certain standard.

If they are the father, if they are the mother, they are to be respected upon pain of death. If you strike them, it's the death penalty. If you curse them out loud, it's the death penalty in Israel.

And we haven't even gotten one chapter away from our study in Exodus yet. Exodus 22, 28. You shall not curse God, nor shall you curse a ruler of your people.

This idea of cursing, it isn't just because God picked fathers and mothers out of a hat and said, well, I'm just going to make up some commands and I'll just dream this up. There's a reason why cursing or striking the father and mother is a death penalty offense. Why honoring father and mother is on God's tablet of the law.

Because it is part and parcel of the fabric of human civilization, human society, that God has ordained, that God has established. Respect for authority. God is not kidding around.

Why do you think this is? Let's just ponder on this for a moment. Why does God place such a great emphasis on it? Well, think. Little children, ostensibly, ideally, grow up in a family where there are parents, where there's a father and mother in the household.

One or both, right? Where is the first place a human being should be learning respect for authority? It's in the home. Look at it this way. A person who cannot, who does not, respect parental authority is not going to respect God's authority.

You can't do one without doing the other. You can't disrespect your parents and respect God.

You can't disrespect the government and respect God.

You can't disrespect the teacher in the classroom or the employer in the workplace and respect God. It is all part of the same thing. It is the same authority.

Who has put men in rule over us? Who chose our parents? Who chooses our situation, where we are born, when we are born, what government is in place? God establishes mandates and vets that authority. He is the one that approved it. He is the one that allows it to continue.

And I don't care if it's the worst government that ever lived. I don't care if it's the government in Iraq. Do you realize that if you're an Iraqi and you're a Christian and Saddam Hussein is in power in the 90s and he passes a law, you have to do your best to obey that law as long as it does not violate your scriptural, moral standards.

If Saddam Hussein passed a law in Iraq that says you will hang my picture over your fireplace in every home in Iraq and you're a Christian, that's the law of the land. That is a God-ordained authority. And only in the case where scriptural guidance trumps, if he says fall down and worship my picture, you're off the hook.

But if he says hang a picture, the city of Garland says you will put your street address numbers in some sort of visible manifestation on the front and back of your house. It's to help, I guess, the fire department and the police and the trash pickup and all the different city services. They need to be able to identify houses both from the street and from the alley.

The numbers have to be there. That's a law of the city. Well, maybe I think it messes up my decor.

Maybe I think I'm a free American citizen and it's property I'm paying for. I ought to be able to do what I want. The city says put the numbers easily, prominently displayed front and back.

We do that whether we like it or not, whether we agree with it or not. That seems like a harmless example, but it is no different. Only when there is a good scriptural reason to not obey the law of the land do we not obey.

If they said turn informer and give up your Christian brethren so that we can incarcerate them and torture them and put them to death, I wouldn't do that. If I was in a prison camp and somebody says, well, I'm your authority now. Tell me what I want to know.

I have a higher law that trumps and outranks that instruction. But we disregard and we flaunt the laws of our land to our peril. Whether it is the speed limit, and I wince when I say that, but even if it is the speed limit, it's the law of the land.

If it is the parking meter downtown, we say I think I can bend the thing, can't find a quarter, I'll park here a little while and see if I can beat the system. I tried that recently and failed. I got tangled up.

A sweet lady started talking to me and I couldn't gracefully leave. And by the time I escaped, my meter had run out. And I mean, I think they have little beacons or transmitters.

I'm not kidding. I think the parking meters downtown are bugged in some fashion. I think as soon as one of them trips expired, some kind of a signal gets sent to the meter reader because I promise you, it had not been three minutes and there was a ticket under my windshield.

But I pay it with a clear conscience. I deserve it. I outran the time.

That's part of the law. It's part of the city thing. If you stay longer than 15 minutes, out comes your \$20 bill.

So, you know, carry some quarters. I was short on change. I put in everything I had and I missed it by three minutes.

\$20. But you shall not. Look at this 28 of Exodus 22.

You shall not curse God. You shall not curse a ruler of your people. They're in the same breath.

They're in the same sentence. Cursing a ruler of the people, cursing father and mother, not honoring father and mother. God says, that's me.

You remember when Jesus said, if you have done it to the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me? Well, God has the same attitude here in Israel. If you disrespect the authority that God sets up, you disrespect God. You call his judgment into question.

You call his control over history into question. You say, I have a better plan. I'm smarter.

I've got more discretion. I know that I have a better idea, and so I'm going to disregard. I'm going to dishonor, disrespect.

You might as well walk up to the throne of God and spit at it, if you walk up to an authority and spit at it. It's all the same thing. This is how it's presented in Scripture.

Lest you think I'm just pulling a few passages here, this is throughout the word of God. What is the first example of disrespect to a father? Going back to Genesis. Think about the days of the flood.

Why is there a curse on Canaan? However you understand the details of what happened there with Ham, what is the difference between Ham versus Shem and Japheth? Ham, whatever he did, disrespected his father, and the other two sons did not. And that is your first great example of disrespect for a parental unit. And you can see the long-lasting consequences.

The descendants of Ham through Canaan are forever cursed. Now what does that mean? You draw the short straw and get born into the line of Canaan, and you just really have no hope? Again, going back to my understanding of the way God worked history in the old dispensation,

if God knows ahead of time there are people that are going to need cursing, stick them in the line of Ham. Stick them in the line of Canaan.

It's convenient. Already got a cursed line there. Here are some people that need cursing.

Here's a curse I've pronounced. Stick them in there. Stick them in the second or third generation of them that hate me and make an example.

By grouping people into national units or into units of this nature, God can make an example of the group to illustrate and to communicate timeless principles that in actuality apply to each and every individual in every dispensation of history. It applies on the macro level for illustrative purposes in the Old Testament. God doesn't really do this anymore.

He doesn't take clans or tribes or nations and mark them out as a group and bless them or curse them. Everything is on an individual basis because He has given us the macro illustrations in the Old Testament Scriptures. And the way that He deals with nations is the way that He deals with individuals.

It's the same God with the same principles, the same calling, the same commands in terms of reflecting God's glory in the broad sense. Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 3. Leviticus 19.3 Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father and you shall keep my sabbaths. I am the Lord your God.

Here, once again, reverence for father and mother is tied in the same breath, the same sentence, the same imperative I am the Lord your God. Those two are linked together. Reverence mother and father and keep my sabbaths.

They're at the same level. Verse 32 of Leviticus 19. You shall rise up before the gray-headed and honor the aged and you shall revere your God.

I am the Lord. Revere God, revere the elderly. Why revere the elderly? Two reasons.

One, these gray-headed that are to be honored are the ones in the near periphery. They're going to be your father, your grandfather, your relatives. And those were the leaders in Israel.

It was a patriarchal society. The elders of Israel are the government. They are the local judiciary.

They settled disputes within the clan and within the family going back even before the deliverance. But when Moses comes out, Jethro, Reuel visits his father-in-law and says, you can't do this all yourself. And the elder system of justice is set up.

Honor the gray-headed. Honor authority. If the court system says something, may not like it, may not agree with it, but that is the constituted authority commissioned by God, approved by God, preserved by God, tolerated by God, even when they're wrong, that is God's system.

And we flaunt it. We disrespect it at our peril. God says, rise up before the gray-headed, honor

the aged, and revere God.

It's all the same. It's tied together. Part of the same fabric.

Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 9. Leviticus 20 verse 9. If there is anyone who curses his father or his mother, he shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood guiltiness is upon him.

His blood shall be upon him. Now, you know what this context is? The previous verse? Mediums and familiar spirits. The person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits to prostitute himself with them, I will set my face against that person and cut him off from his people.

Not a death penalty offense, by the way. God's face is set against him and he's cut off from his people. This is expulsion.

This is loss of citizenship. This is exile. Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy.

God says, Leviticus 20 verse 7. For I am the Lord your God, and you shall keep my statutes and perform them. I am the Lord who sanctifies you. For everyone who curses his father and mother shall surely be put to death.

He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him. Then what is the following context? Verse 10.

The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness. Both of them shall surely be put to death.

Notice, cursing the father and mother is on a level with adultery and incest and it is a death penalty offense in Israel. Deuteronomy chapter 5 and verse 16. Honor your father and mother as the Lord your God has commanded you so that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land which the Lord your God gives you.

Deuteronomy 21, 18. If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. This is the judiciary.

The gates of the city are the courts. This is where the bema is. This is where issues are resolved.

Elders of the city, gateway of the hometown, they shall say to the elders of his city, this son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard.

Then all of the men of his city shall stone him to death. So you shall remove the evil from your midst. All Israel will hear of it and fear.

It is to be public execution. For what? Stubbornness and rebellion of children against parents. This is someone still living in the household.

This is a lad or daughter of teenage years. They're old enough to be held accountable to the extent of their life for their obedience or disobedience. Notice his father and mother shall seize him.

He is not grown because his father and mother can drag him by the arm down to the judges and say this one is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. Notice it says he is a glutton and a drunkard.

What does this mean? Does he literally have to have eaten too much and drunk too much? Gluttony and drunkenness are vices of excess for self-gratification. This is any form of excessive self-gratification. He does what he does, violating authority, flaunting rules for his own gratification.

How else in the ancient world would you gratify your own desires? They didn't have X-Boxes and Nintendos. They didn't have sneaking out the drainpipe and going out to be with your friends. They had parties.

Lots of food and lots of drink. That's basically all you can do when you're wandering around in the wilderness and you want to rebel is you go steal food and eat it with your friends. You go steal wine and drink it with your friends.

What else is there? He is a glutton and a drunkard. The men of the city shall stone him to death. This is to be society.

This is the community. You know, Mrs. former President Clinton wrote her book, It Takes a Village. Well, guess what? To execute the rebellious teenager, it takes a village.

The men of the city come out and see, I ought to write my own book. I'll just call it, Yeah, It Takes a Village. Deuteronomy 27, 16 Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother and all the people shall say, Amen.

They do that in church a lot too now. 1 Kings 2, verse 19 This is the example of Adonijah disrespecting his father, trying to take the throne away from his brother. David had said Solomon will be the next king.

Adonijah said, Oh, the old doddering fool, I want to be the next king. You know the story that took place there. Similarly, in a positive sense, to honor someone is to treat them as a father, a synonym for honoring someone is to call them father.

You have this example with Elisha and Elijah in 2 Kings 2. When the fiery chariot comes down to take Elijah to his eternal reward, Elisha saw it. This is 2 Kings 2. Elisha saw it and cried out, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen. And he saw Elijah no more and he

took hold of his clothes and tore them in half.

The honoring of Elijah as the great prophet that he was and as the spirit of Elijah descends upon Elisha, he calls him my father. Now a father was a sign of respect and a sign of honor because that is how the father is to be treated. 2 Kings 5.13 Naaman, the Syrian general, you remember he comes and Elisha tells him dip in the Jordan seven times and he gets all angry and he says what kind of advice is this? And he's ready to stomp back to Syria.

And his servants came near and spoke to him. 2 Kings 5.13 And said, My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? They're being as respectful as they can be. They know he's in a rage.

They know he's disappointed and frustrated. So what do they do? To honor him and to soothe his nerves. They call him my father.

Honor, respect. That is what the position is to do. You think about the Lord Jesus encouraging us to address God in Heaven as the Father.

You see some of the flippant and casual and familiar displays of worship that go on today. Let's give the Lord a hand and this kind of thing. Let's all clap for God like we would clap for somebody who sang a good song or somebody who did a spinning dance on their head or something.

Well, let's give the Lord a hand. It denigrates. It cheapens.

It's just like I was telling Patty, we heard on the radio that Mick Jagger got knighted in England, received a knighthood. And I'm thinking, you know, the value of a knighthood just went down all over England. It cheapens that honor to give it to a gigantic flake of that magnitude whose accomplishments are what? I leave you to fill out that list if you can.

What are Mick Jagger's accomplishments for which he should receive a knighthood and be called Sir Mick? To try to reduce God to a celebrity who can be honored with applause and with the kind of cheap treatment to which he is subjected in a lot of modern worship violates this principle. God is our Father. And in Israel that meant something.

It meant that is someone to be honored and respected and obeyed. 2 Kings 13, Elisha receives the same honor that he accorded to Elijah as he became sick and is on his deathbed. Joash, the good king of Israel, came down to him and wept over him and said, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen.

That's right up there with the last words of Stonewall Jackson. Great deathbed scenes. The honor that is accorded to Elisha is the same one that he used for his mentor Elijah.

Proverbs 1, what is the purpose for observing and honoring the father and mother? They are the primary source of instruction. If you do not honor your father and mother, you can't learn

what you need to know for life. This is why the prophet was honored in Israel.

This is why the parents are honored in families. Proverbs 1, verses 8 and 9, Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck.

You do yourself a favor when you honor father and mother and you listen to their godly instruction. Proverbs 6, verse 20, My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother. Proverbs 15, 5, The fool rejects his father's discipline, but he who regards reproof is sensible.

Proverbs 19, 26, He who assaults his father and drives away his mother is a shameful and disgraceful son. Proverbs 20, 20, He who curses his father or his mother, his lamp will go out in time of darkness. Proverbs 23, 22, Listen to your father who begot you and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Buy truth and do not sell it. Get wisdom and instruction and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice and he who sires a wise son will be glad in him.

Let your father and your mother be glad and let her rejoice who gave birth to you. Proverbs 28, 24, He who robs his father or his mother and says it is not a transgression is the companion of the man of destruction. Proverbs 30, verse 11, There is a kind of man who curses his father and does not bless his mother.

You go down to 30, 17 of Proverbs, The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out and the young eagles will eat it. How many different ways does God try to impress on us the importance of the fifth commandment, the importance of the principle that underlies the fifth commandment. Authority is the strength of the fabric of human community, human society, certainly of the nation of Israel.

You know, they used to make T-shirts out of cotton, but they found that they shrank and they shredded, they weren't very durable. And so in our modern day, they started making T-shirts out of a combination of cotton and polyester. Why do they add polyester into so many cotton garments? It adds strength.

It's not particularly comfortable, but it adds strength. It's stronger than cotton. When you take the strength out of a fabric, you can look at something and it may still seem to be a garment and it may still seem to be whole, but the strength is gone.

And that's our nation today. That's the nation of Israel in many phases of its history where respect for authority eroded and went away and it was manifest in dishonoring God's name, tolerating idols, disrespecting parents, and that whole first table of the law is disregarded. God begins to disregard that person or that family or that nation.

There is no alternative. There's no other way around it. Jeremiah 35, verse 18, Jeremiah said to

the house of the Rechabites, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands, and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before me always.

In a time of degeneracy, in a time of apostasy, Jeremiah is the weeping prophet warning Israel that they're about to go out under discipline, but the house of Rechab, R-E-C-H-A-B, follows the instruction of their father. They're faithful. And God says, you know what? Jonadab the son of Rechab will never lack a man standing before me.

This is priesthood. This is worship. This is service.

And it is an everlasting honor to that faithful house that honored their father. Ezekiel 22.7, in the list of grievances that God has with Israel, they have treated father and mother lightly within you, the alien they have oppressed in your midst, the fatherless and the widow they have wronged in you. There are an endless supply of scriptures that make this point, but I think we see what the importance is that God attaches this and that He ties it to Himself.

He ties it to Himself. You cannot dishonor authority without dishonoring God. You cannot disregard authority without disregarding God.

Just remember, any authority, the picture in Israel, the fundamental unit, the lowest common denominator of authority is the father and mother in the home. Honor your father and mother. Respect authority.

Why? Because if you fail there, all of the other authorities are off the table. Are you going to be a wonderful American citizen and yet you disregard your parents? Are you going to be a great military servant, a great enlisted man or a great officer and fully function within that highly authoritarian structure and yet you can't operate in the authority of a family? It is the fundamental building block. They say if you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere.

If I can make it there, I can make it anywhere. Authority in the home is where human beings learn and decide whether or not they're going to function anywhere else. If you foul it up in the home, you're hopeless.

Where else are you going to find respect for authority? Even going in boot camp and going in the military is only going to put a veneer over you. It begins in the home. It begins with father and mother.

In the same way that the love of money is the root of all evil, disrespect of father and mother is the root of all anti-authoritarianism, especially that and ultimately that of God. They are inextricably linked. They are tied together eternally.

So that's why the fifth commandment is on God's table of the law because you can't get to the rest of the table. You can't even begin to respect your neighbor and respect your community if

you can't respect your parents. It is a part of God's plan.

It is a part of God's command. And the penalty for failure in this area is severe. It is the severest, which tells us how important it is.

Well, it's great food for thought. We're going to have to pause at this point. We'll pick up and cover the second table of the law when we meet again in our study of Exodus.

But let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the clarity with which you have communicated your will to us, the illustrations, the pictures that you have for us in your word leave us in no doubt as to what you require and what the basis of your evaluation and judgment of us is. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths in our hearts, help us to make the application in our lives and in our thinking in days ahead.

We pray that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work through the truth of your word and the ministry of your spirit within us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.