

Clough Deuteronomy Session 17

Deuteronomy 5:6-21: The Societal Implications of the Decalogue Structure
Fellowship Chapel; 30 Mar 10

On our handout tonight we are on the same section we were last time and if you have missed these handouts I suggest that you have a notebook or a binder that you can put these in because they'll be good to review and go back on, and if you don't have them you can go on the Bible Framework website and download the first ten, the first ten lessons are there and in a few more weeks the first 15 lessons will be on site, and you can download those, you can download the power points, you can download the audios, MP3 or whatever. So that's there but it doesn't do you any good if you don't have access to them personally.

Tonight we are on Deuteronomy 5 so if you'll turn there we're on that Mount Sinai event and we are in the middle of doing the Ten Commandments, and of course, we want to use this time to learn a little bit how to think within a biblical framework. That's one of the things that I hope you get out of this is that when you read the Scriptures it's not enough just to read the Scriptures but you want to be able to recall what you have read and be able to use the content of what's in the Scriptures. I've found that it's very important in a culture such as we now have where we're basically under the gun and there's a lot of heretical discussions going on that you need to be able to see the big picture and that requires a teamwork of different doctrines operating. You can't take a fragment of Scripture alone and work with it in most cases; in most cases you're going to need... like a football team has different positions, they need all eleven players. So when you deal with the Scriptures you need to think how to deploy the great truths of the Bible from one end to the other as a unified team. That way you're able to surround unbelief and neutralize it. If you don't do that you will be surrounded and neutralized. So it's whoever dominates, and the person who wins, the person who dominates the scene is going to be the person that has access to all the players.

So, for example, we've been working with this slide that we've looked at and I used that slide showing that there's a structure to society and I deliberately designed the slide that way because I want you to be aware of why it is when you read the Old Testament that for Old Testament prophets the chief sin is not social disruption; the chief sin is not immorality. The chief sin is idolatry and that may seem very obscure to us today because we think in terms of idolatry as some little cute statue somewhere or some little Buddha thing. That's not the point. The point is that idolatry changes the foundation down in this area. In other words, you have politics up here and by that I don't mean political parties, I mean the functioning of a society, the functioning of a group. It doesn't matter, you can have politics in a small group and a large group, it's just people interacting with each other. You can have it in a corporation, you can have it in a school, you can have it in a company, you can have it in a classroom. So politics is just the word I'm using on this chart to depict social interactions.

Well, underneath politics you have ethics and whenever you have the disruption in a social situation where people can't get along, or people are having a discussion about something that's a little upsetting or disruptive, usually the problem here is traced down one step below that

because people have different ethical views. But if they have different ethical views, then why are those there? Those are there because of the way they treat epistemology; epistemology is just a fancy word for saying how do I know what you're telling me is true? How are you able to ascertain truth? Everybody has an answer to this, it's just most people aren't self-conscious of it. But every day, 24 hours a day you're operating with an epistemology of some sort, just as you are operating with an ethic.

And then that in turn is a function of the metaphysics, or the answer to the question, what's your purpose in life; what's the big idea here, where am I going, where's history going, what is it made of, what are the ultimate fallback positions? So idolatry falsifies who God is and if you falsify who God is you have changed the metaphysics and epistemology. Epistemology from the Bible is we know because God, who has created, has also spoken to us in history, we have revelation. So our epistemology is wrapped up with revelation, but if you have a false notion of God you also tamper with how He speaks. Maybe you have a god who is a god of the trees or something and he doesn't talk, he's a dumb god in the sense of not having speech. If that's the case, then you've changed things down here and you've changed things here, you don't have a Creator/creature distinction any more, that's gone.

The modern deep ecology movements are very much like ancient Baalism, that it's nature and man are one and there's a tremendous conflict here because in the ethical realm today, in the deep environmental movement, nature is more important than man. In the Bible man is more important than nature. Now you can't have two people discussing a political issue, one of which comes at it with nature more important than man and the other one comes at it with man more important than nature and not have a problem. And you can't resolve that problem by shouting at each other. The only way you can deal with that problem, if you can at all, is to go one step deeper and deal with what is nature, what is the source of nature, what is the cause of nature, what is the cause of man, what is the source of man. So you see, in the conversation you're going down, down, down, because it's down here at this basic area where the conflict lies. That's why idolatry is so central in the Bible.

So now in order to deal with the ethical problem and to appreciate... all this, by the way, is to appreciate what is going on here with the Ten Commandments, so this is all just background to understand we're not just looking at a Sunday School sweet little story about gee, Moses thought he heard God on Mount Sinai 2500 years ago, because there are people, and if a person is out of a liberal Christian theology or an unbelieving theology they don't buy Mount Sinai; nothing happened, God didn't speak on Mount Sinai, Moses was on a trip or something. And people have seriously, even an Israeli scholar seriously said that, that Moses actually was eating herbs and stuff and he had a vision on Mount Sinai. So that's how they deal with that.

Now the next slide deals with this question and we want to spend some time on this because if you don't ask big questions when you come to the text of Scripture you won't get big answers. You have to ask the text big questions, just as if you were sitting with the Lord and you're having a discussion, as they did in Nazareth, or they did in Bethany, and you were

in a roundtable discussion, you would want to ask Him these big questions. Well, you can ask the Scripture those questions. So let's look at some of the questions here. We're dealing now with that second level, the ethics issue.

When we come with ethics we've got a problem. Remember we said the ethics... what's underneath the ethics? How you know and what is the nature of man, what is the nature of the universe and so on. So looks, in this chart we have separated on the left side the source of ethics being in man and on the right side the source in the Creator, Judge and Savior. I use those three nouns for God to describe His three roles. He's the Creator, He is the Judge that holds His creation responsible, and He is the Savior that is graciously offering salvation. So we have to, when we talk about God, we have to load that three letter word with some content. So that's why we use those three nouns. So now if God is the source... the ethical question is: who are you to tell me how I should live my life. So the real ethical question is who are you, where is the ethical authority, who is your ethical authority? It's not a what, you can't get ethical authority out of a what, you get an ethical authority out of a who. So now the question is: who is the who? Is it man or is it God, and depending on your answer to that there's all kinds of things that fall out and we want to think about that. If it's the source of man the question is where is the source in man for moral authority? So it's not enough just to say somebody said, we have to say well who is the somebody who's doing the saying? Where do they get their authority from?

I'll give you a contemporary example. Today we hear a lot about the right for gay marriage; everybody has a right. Now the question is, who says? Where's this "right" coming from? And I haven't even read a news article or a journal article or a magazine article that even raises the question. This is how trivial our culture is right at the moment. This is why we're having all these stupid little discussions with everybody yelling at each other, because nobody is going deeply enough to discuss what the question is: the question is where do you get rights from, that's the question. And you can't answer about rights, "I have a right to do this, a right to do that," no you don't. You don't have a right until you tell me where you're getting your right from. So this is the source of authority.

If man is the source of authority where in man do you get it? And there's several answers that have been given, I'm not making this up, this is common answers. One is the individual, this is moral relativism. It is up to the individual to decide. This is why we have such chaos in corporations and financial bookkeeping, this is why we have corruption there, because the generation that's running the country basically is the generation that came out of the 60's and the hippie era and they're the people that are making the big decisions in our country and our culture. And this is why you have a relativism, "I'm going to do what I think is right," but that's subjective morals, that is a relativist morals, and the problem is when you think about when I decide what I want to do and I say that that's right or that's wrong all I can justify that, or you could, is it's personal taste, something is wrong because I don't like it. That's all you can say if you're an individual, I just don't like it. Well so what? See. It leads to triviality. Furthermore, if everybody did that you'd have anarchy because everybody would be saying I want this, I want that. So that theory of ethics falls apart and if you're talking with

someone about that, push them back, push them back, push them deeper and deeper and deeper till you expose for them that this leads to chaos. You don't have to put the Bible up front yet that'll come, but right away they've got a problem.

Next, another idea has been given and that is social consensus is the source of right and wrong. We build our ethics on consensus; that's quite popular today, the 51%. But if someone says that they believe in the consensus theory of ethics here's the problem, here's the question they can't answer. In the south, in the days of segregation, was it true or was it not true that 51% more of the people believed in segregation? Then how could Martin Luther King argue that it was wrong? If ethics are social consensus then how do you reform it? The point is all your base here, if the base of the first relativistic ethic is personal taste, this is just consensus and consensus could change tomorrow. In other words, you do not have an absolute objective standard; it's missing, it's missing on the individual basis and it's missing on the consensus basis.

Then finally, what usually happens in society is you wind up with an elitism where the powerful decide what is right and what is wrong, never mind the consensus. And this theory is that somehow the elite have a moral advantage, they somehow have ethical discernment that nobody else has. And what you have now is a surrogate infallibility of a priesthood, the infallibility of an elite to decide what is wrong and what is right. So then the question that you ask is: and where do you get your infallible insights? So the problem is it's laced with an inability on this side to find any source of moral authority in man. This is a tremendous weakness and every unbelieving non-biblical thinker has this tremendous weakness, it's a vacuum, and we need to learn how to exploit that in a gentle way, in a gracious way in a conversation by asking questions. All you have to do is just keep asking questions; let the other person handle the ball. It's like tennis, bat the ball into the other guy's court and let him fumble with it; you don't have to be up front defending the Bible, the ball goes into their court.

Now, here's another problem, over on the left side, and this is a classic problem, it's been known for centuries, you cannot get an ought from an is, and what that means is that if this is reality, after I say that this is what reality is, how do I say what reality ought to be? That's not coming from what is, it's coming from somewhere else but it's not coming from what is, so you can't get an ought from an is.

C. S. Lewis points that out; the imperative verb does not follow from the indicative mood. And there's not a link, you've got to have a basic, you can't jump from what is to what ought to be without some intermediate steps and you need to tell me, where are you getting the oughts from. Well, this ought to be like that, it ought not to be like this. Yeah, but it is like this. So where's the ought, where's your vision of what it ought to be coming out of, what's its source.

Okay now we also know, another problem on the left side is all men lack motivation and enablement to live consistently ethical lives. I mean, we know that as Christians. So there's all kinds of problems on the left side of the chart and so therefore I don't have to be ashamed as a Christian, the unbeliever has to be ashamed because the non-Christian doesn't have answers to these questions.

Now let's go to the right side of the diagram, we have source and judge and Savior, Mount Sinai event, the self-revealing God of history. Now here is where we want to go forward with the framework a little bit more, by one more step here. Here are all the events and the associated doctrines in the Old Testament; if you want to see this go to the Bible Framework website and you'll see the whole course that I gave back decades ago. But here are the events and here are all the doctrines that you can associate with those events; by associate I mean in your mind's eye you picture these events. For tonight's sake, just pretend in your mind's eye that you're there at Sinai, you put yourself in that event in your imagination. Then absorb the biblical story and play the video to your mind and what do you get?

If you were to experience the Mount Sinai event what does that tell you about God? What are the central truths that emerge from that movie that you're playing in your mind. And of course, these classic doctrines on the right side, the three doctrines that come out of this and we'll go into just one of them tonight, we mentioned it last time, it's revelation: revelation, inspiration and canonicity. But revelation, we went through that doctrine last time because that's the answer to how you know. So this is not some random theological exercise here; we bring in an entire truth about how God has spoken down through the corridors of time. So it's not that we're sitting here and we're somehow making all this up, we're not sitting here and relying on one person, we're relying on a chain of people who existed over century after century after century, millennia after millennia, all speaking the coherent message. And at certain points in this time, certain points that were dramatic episodes, like Mount Sinai, we are, as I said, and I do not tire saying this, that if you were there visualizing Mount Sinai that you could have heard God speaking in Hebrew the Ten Words, and it's a momentous... I mean, just think of what we're thinking about here. Here was a moment in historical time when you didn't need a vast radio telescope array in Arizona to see if there were intelligent life in the realms of the universe. I'm not really making fun of that, of the millions of dollars that went in there, although it could be asked about, why we're spending millions and millions of dollars to find out the origin of the universe when you can go to the library and get a Bible. But the point is that there's a serious probing of the outer reaches of the universe for life. Now just think of what Mount Sinai says here. It says that the originator, the Creator, the Judge and finally the end, the guy that's in charge of the end game of cosmic history, as immense as the universe is, stooped down, came down to the top of one mountain in the 14th - 15th centuries, in that time period, and spoke in the language of the people He was talking to, gee, how did He know Hebrew?

The point is that out of that flows an entire philosophy of knowledge and the basis for knowledge. And if you don't buy into this you've got some serious problems and you can't come and whine about the Bible because you've got no answers. Until you come up with better answers we're not going to listen to you because you don't have any answers to this.

So let's look at this. The fact is that revelation, so we know what we're talking about because I showed you a quotation two or three lessons back where this theologian said that we don't have truths of revelation, we only have truths that people who somehow experienced revelation came up

with. That is a false view of revelation so let's be clear what we mean by revelation—we mean that God has spoken, it has a verbal characteristic, and that means it includes information transfer from God to man. You almost have to say it this way to get it across to a post-modern generation that somehow just cannot get this idea and that is information, was there information transferred from God's mind to the people? Was that the case? Do you believe that or don't you believe it? So that's the test, that's one of the litmus tests of whether we have a correct view of revelation. Then it's personal, it's not a computer speaking from Mount Sinai, it's a person. And because it's a person that's doing the speaking and we are people doing the receiving, we're involved in a personal relationship. And we're going to respond to that in some way, we're not going to be neutral because when somebody is talking to us we either turn our back, we tune them out or we listen. And God says you tuned Me out. So again it involves a personal relationship.

The third one, it's historical, meaning it's not one guy, not Joseph Smith, not Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy, not Buddha, not Confucius, not Zoroaster, not one person, not Mohammed, but a historical chain, a historical memory, I'm mixing this up here, intermittent so it depends on historical memory, the idea there is that you have to... there's a memory that goes on of the past event, it's comprehensive, it spans all of life, and prophetic, there's a line of self-consistent prophets with a horizon to the end of history. And by that we don't depend on one person, it's multiple people, some of whom were ordinary shepherds writing, others were well educated men like Paul, some were fisherman like Peter, businessmen, others were eccentrics, like Ezekiel, so all these kind of personalities down through the corridors of time. So this is what we mean by revelation and nothing less than this.

So how is this, in summary, just to get into the Decalogue now, some lessons to learn here. You've got to press home a question and the question that you have to press home to yourself sometime when you're arguing with your own soul, who is the who? Who is the source of ethics? Who is the source of my standards? Is it me or is it someone else? Is it my peers? It can't be those, it can't be self, it can't be peers, it can't even be churches, it can't be government, it can't be the state, it has to be God is the source of the standards. And this is what is so threatening down through history to empires, to emperors. This is why the Roman Empire went after the Christians. They didn't go after the Christians because they had weapons for warfare, I mean, Christians weren't armed, they weren't inciting revolution. You say well, why did they do that? The same reason Hitler went after the Church. A quote from the AFA Magazine, a January issue, and what did Hitler say? Two of the things he said, politics does not belong in the pulpit of the churches, the churches are to mind their business and stay out of the politics, meaning that God's Word doesn't apply to society. And of course you know why he didn't want that, he didn't want the fact that people in Germany would have allegiance to a transcendent authority over him. When you hear that complaint about the church and politics, ask yourself the next question: what sneaky are you planning that you are bothered by the fact that the church might be watching you? And so the Caesars and the Hitler's resent the idea that people under them have an authority over them. That in itself, you don't have to say anything else, just that is a threat.

And furthermore, when you come across those who argue with you that well, you know, it's kind of arrogant to say that the Bible is the way when there are other views, I mean, there's the Koran, there's the Bhagavad Gita, there are other religious documents and there are some good atheist treatises out there too so how can you have the arrogance to say that your way is the right way. It's very simple, the issue isn't my way or your way, the issue is has God spoken in history? You're begging the question, if you're trying to phrase it by saying that this book ought not to be believed, it's an act of arrogance to hold this up as an authority you're already begging the question because what you're in effect saying is it's a product of man. And if it is a product of man you're right, it is arrogant to assert that this is the authority overall. But you see, you've got a hidden problem, your problem is that you've already decided in your mind that it is a product of man, and then with that assumption you're asking the question, well it's arrogant. It's only arrogant if it's a product of man and I don't agree with that, so you're just begging the question. The question isn't that, the question is has God spoken in history? Yes or no. And that's a question to ask and if they say "no," say "how do you know that?" So this is the substance behind this Decalogue that we're looking at now.

Now we want to return to the chiasmic structure if we can. People ask why is it called chiasmic structure; the Greek word Chi, which I put in parenthesis there, see the "X" and so the literary analysts that look for chiasms... see this line going down like that, and then this line going like that and they cross right here, that's why they call it a chiasm. You can diagram the literature so it falls out in this pattern and we said that this pattern, we mentioned it last time and went through the justification for it so tonight we want to go forward and say to ourselves what does this imply?

Now in a chiasm where the two lines cross this line going up to the right, this one coming down to the right, it crosses right here at verse 17, thou shalt do no murder. Now that means that the emphasis in the literary structure is on the command, "Thou shalt not kill," thou shalt not murder, which means that it's talking about life. I'd like to maybe see what some of your feedback is here tonight, see if we can think this thing through. If that is the core of God's concern, remember He's talking to a nation, He's talking about how this nation is to be run because He is going to be the King of this nation and these are His policies, and His policy centers on life. Now, in a chiasm you go back up the chain one step and come down the chain one step and if you do that, what do you notice? Well, look at verse 16, "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you." Then it has verse 17, "Thou shalt not murder." Then verse 18, "Thou shalt not commit adultery. So verse 18 and verse 16 both are dealing with the integrity of the home. Society depends upon functional marriage and family, marriage is to be protected. Then you go up one more step and you see in verses 12-15, "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," it's talking about what you do with labor and so on, and then it says in verse 19, "You shall not steal," both of those deal with property. Does anyone see a connection that's going on here? If you were to look at this chiasm could you extract from the chiasm, from this structure, how

God has designed society to function properly? If the core purpose in a social order is to have life, quality of life, why do you suspect that in this chiasm there's a sequence; the first sequence around life is what? [someone answers, can't hear] Okay, but going up one step here and down one step. Right, marriage and family; isn't that the immediate source of life? And if those are damaged what happens to the quality of life in society? Why is it we can go up here to the penitentiary, talk to the inmates, and see how seventy to eighty percent of them come from dysfunctional homes. How can you have life if you're going to have a dysfunctional family?

Okay, let's go up one more step. We've got life, the immediate source of life is the family, now what's the next thing? Management of labor and property, property is to be protected. What's the relationship? Life, product of the family, the family produces life, but how is the family sustained? Labor and property. What happens to family life in extreme poverty? It goes to pot. Do you see what God is doing in the way He's speaking the Ten Commandments, how He's getting to the core and then He's protecting it with a case around it; life, and that's protected and it's produced by a family, marriage and family. And then the marriage and the family has a core around it, labor and property. Now let's go back one more step, accuracy and language about God, verse 11, verse 20, accuracy and language in judicial proceedings. Now how does that work together here in our thinking? We have life, we have marriage and family that produce it, now we have property and labor that produces the wealth so the family can function. And then the next layer is language; now what role does language play, integrity in language in other words, what role does that play in sustaining the rest of it? When you have business and property, doesn't it rely on contract integrity? How can you have labor, and how can you have property if you don't have integrity in language and promises? [someone apparently says: language] Yeah, and it's got to have language with integrity. And then outside of the language, now we're getting into some deep stuff of truth and personal communication, now we come to the last layer, God alone is worthy of worship and service, self is not worthy of worship and service. What's that talking about? It's talking about the heart, it's talking about the ultimate point of contact with God Himself.

So let's throw this diagram up; God's design of society. Let's see if you agree. Down at the lowest level, or the basic level we have the first and tenth commandments, heart allegiance, one to God, or one to self, d^ocor. And we want to grab that because Deuteronomy chapter 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and most of chapter 11 deal with just this one thing, heart allegiance. Why does Moses spend half the book of Deuteronomy dealing with heart allegiance for his nation? Because all the rest flows out of that; if that's screwed up the whole nation is screwed up. So you can't produce the order, the structure, you can't have wealth, you cannot have freedom, you cannot have functional families, you cannot have integrity of language without the heart allegiance. And the problem here is that heart allegiance can't be legislated. What laws are you going to do, how are the police going to check up on heart allegiance. You can't put a security camera to discern what heart allegiance is going on. So see, that's the problem.

Ultimately what Moses is saying to these people, after forty years of watching a flunky generation, he is saying that you people will never have national prosperity if you don't get this point; you have got to have a common allegiance to your King, Jehovah. And if you're not going to have that we're not going to have a nation, it's that simple. It's ultimate heart allegiance.

Then, on top of that, now we have the integrity of communication. On one side we have integrity of communication consistently states truth. Now you can't have integrity, think more deeply about this a moment, you can't have integrity of language if you don't have clarity as to what truth is. If you're a post modern person, if you learn English in the typical English literature class today in our high schools, in our secular high schools, they're teaching a philosophy of language that destroys this because you can't access truth by language; language is just something that you express but it doesn't communicate truth. Your expression is your expression, maybe you're a female and you express your femaleness, or you're a male and you express your maleness, or you're a white man and you express your whiteness or you're a black man and you express your blackness, it's all expression but it's not talking about truth, and you don't have truth if you don't come down to this level and deal with God and how He speaks in revelation. See what I'm getting at, this whole ball of wax here, people. And it's all embedded in the Ten Commandments. God said it in Ten Words. What we have to do is unpack the words a little bit, and holy mackerel, look what we're finding in this thing.

So integrity of communication, you have to have the idea that truth is attainable and knowable. Nobody believes that in the intellectual circles today; very, very few people seriously believe that you can ever know the truth; all we have are exchanges of opinions and we try to get consensus, but nobody is talking about truth. What is true, what is false? That doesn't make sense if there's not a God like the God of the Scriptures, who has created us a perfectly rational mind, and designed the environment so that my mind can go out and observe and make conclusions about that environment. See, that's a whole philosophy of how do you know, and it's all dependent on the Creator/creature distinction.

Next we come up, so we have truth, over here what happens to the integrity of communication is you deceitfully profess truth but for agendas, there's an agenda; that's stressed today in communications in literature classes. What was the agenda of William Shakespeare as a white Englishman? See, he wrote his language with an agenda. Of course, the person who is saying that doesn't have an agenda, of course. So we have deceitfulness that replaces integrity. This is why you can lie in a corporation on the books and tell stockholders that everything is going to be cool in the third quarter and you know darned well you're lying through your mouth... oh, but we have to do that to protect the price of the shares. Well then, it's deceit.

Then we come up to the next level, labor and property, in the Bible God wants your labor and mine to be respected. The first picture we have of God in the Bible is He's a laborer. Did you ever think of that? The first thing you see God in the Bible He's working, He's putting things together, He's building something and at the end He looks back on His workmanship and He says that's neat. There's a joy in labor, and by the way, it happened before the fall. Labor is not a result of the fall, some

people think that; vexing labor is a result of the fall but labor itself is not something out of the fall, it's not evil. Labor is good and it's so sad that the only people who have comprehensively addressed labor in the last 200 years has been the Marxists, the hammer and the cycle. And I challenge any one of you, have you ever heard a good sermon in any of the years of your Christian life, those of you who have been Christians a long time, have you ever heard a sermon on labor? And yet where to we spend eight to ten hours a day? Labor. We never have a sermon on labor, like the Bible doesn't have anything to say about labor. So labor and property, and when you have property it is to be productive and protected. Now what happens over here? Labor is demeaned, see how I can mooch off the government, how I can manipulate the welfare system so I don't have to work, and property can be wasted, and by the way, from a socialist I can steal your property in the name of the greater good. You begin to see how the Bible is very definitive in a lot of areas, isn't it? Most people don't know the Ten Commandments, the video we had a year ago down in one of the groups here in church was an interview in a Los Angeles street, of course you might know in Los Angeles, but they went out and they asked young people in their 20's about, could you name the Ten Commandments, college grads... huh? Ten what? Oh well, can you name ten brands of beer? Oh yeah, yeah, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. See, that's where we are, college grads. Now we come to marriage and family, it's strong and functional because it depends on this, this and this. Marriage is weak and dysfunctional because of this, this and this. And then life is protected or life is jeopardized.

Okay, let's turn to the text and look at each one of these commandments, we're not going to get through all of them because the first couple of them have a few problem texts in them and we want to be sure we address those. So let's look at Deuteronomy 5:6. We'll look at verses 6-10, that's the first chunk of material in the Decalogue. Remember this is God speaking. No other time in human history has God ever done this. Verses 6-21 are the most important words that have ever been spoken in history. And by the way, the Ten Commandments, what is it that's been excluded from our court system? Isn't it striking, the most important words ever spoken in history and we can't have them in a public area, publicly owned property. Gosh, you don't want to have anything that God says on American property; now you'll see what happens in the next decade.

[6] "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." So notice again that the issue here, right away, is freedom. He wouldn't be talking about slavery; redemption is freedom, I am the God who gave you freedom, "brought you out ... of the house of bondage." [7] You will have no other gods before Me." That's exclusivism; you bet it's exclusivism because He has the right to say it's exclusivism. This is not the words of man now, if it were the words of man then this would be reprehensible, but it's not the words of man. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image-any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; [9] you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, [10] But showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

We want to look carefully at this. If you have your handout, what I did there is I kind of translated the Hebrew just kind of literally, so you kind of get a flavor of it and there's some comments I want to make, so if you'll follow that as we deal with the Scripture, just literally what he's saying, "a jealous God attending to the punishment of the fathers to the children, to the third and fourth generation of the haters of Me." I deliberately did that because I want you to notice that the word "attending" or "visiting" is a participle and Hebrew participles depict character, ongoing and abiding character. I am the God who doesn't do it once, in other words, I am the God who does this in generation after generation. This is my nature, I will oppose those who hate Me and I will get into their family units.

And that's why He says I will punish, punishment "of the fathers to the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me." Now you have to see "those who hate Me" at the end, the haters of Me, that's also a participle. Now some people say well gee, isn't it unfair to blame the children for their daddies? Well, that's not what it's doing, there's not a conflict here with ... the conflict here is one with family units that propagate a sin pattern. That's why it's qualified at the end of the clause, "to the ones who hate Me," to the haters. Now you say well why is it third and fourth generation? Well let's just think about that. What is true of three generations, or four? They tend to be contemporaneous. You can, you know, most of us know our grandparents so we know the third generation back. Sometimes we know our great-grandparents so that would be the fourth generation back. So the idea of the third and fourth generation, particularly in the way they lived in those days, they lived close to one another generally, and they would mimic each other. Now let's see some examples of that, family sin patterns: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the twelve guys; that's four generations, wasn't it. It only took four generations for that family to fall apart and so what did God have to do in the fourth generation? Put them down in Egypt in a segregationist society where they'd be deliberately segregated, and they'd get straightened out. So God disciplined, He stepped into that family at the fourth generation, He said I'm tired of this one family unit and the sin pattern that's being propagated from father to son, father to son, father to son, I'm going to stop it.

You see it again in the New Testament with the Herod's; you have the old man Herod, Great Herod in 4 BC, he's the guy that started genocide and then his descendants get disciplined in the rest of the Bible, so there was four generations there and God finally ended Herod's family. Then you see the Amorites, the Canaanites, remember what He said to Abraham, we'll come back in in the fourth generation and we'll take these people out, their sin is not yet attained that state. So apparently what is embedded here and it goes back to this diagram that we've had and that is the role of marriage and the family. What is the last layer of protection on life? Marriage and family. What is it that most affects life? What's closest to this level? Marriage and family. So this is why God says certain families propagate certain tendencies to sin in their family units. We all have families and we all tend to inherit the flesh of our parents, our mom and dad somehow. This is why raising an orphan or raising a child that's not a natural child is difficult because you don't recognize your sin pattern in them. The embarrassing thing about being a

parent is that you can see your sin nature in your kids. Sometimes it's very humbling, to sit there and discipline a child for doing something that you know darn well you'd be doing, just because you recognize your sin pattern. So the point is that godly families will have to deal with that, but when it's not dealt with it gets worse and worse and worse until finally God says I've had enough.

And by the way, this lesson was so embedded, as I point out in the handouts, that God attends, that God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, that lesson was so impressed in the ancient world that in 586, when the dispersion, the diaspora occurred and the Jews took the message and their history with them all throughout the world, isn't it strange that within 50 years of 586 we have seven world religions start. And every one of those seven world religions were ethical based religions that repudiated the previous mysticisms, kind of demeaned theology and held to the fact that if you choose this then this happens, if you do this then that happens. I wonder where they got that idea from. This was the great witness Israel had in history.

So the point is, as I mention in the bottom of the handout, Ezekiel 18:20, which reads: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son," that is not violated by what God is saying here in this commandment," if you understand what He means when He says those who are haters of Me. In other words, the third and fourth generation, if they continue to be haters of Me.

But now look at the very next sentence, [10] "But showing mercy to thousands," now if you look, most translations in the previous sentence, they say third and fourth and you see generations is in italics, meaning it's a supplied word there. Well, that's because it's true, generations are implied but unfortunately the translators didn't do it in verse 10 where it says "thousands," it should be "thousands of generations." Now if it's "thousands of generations" now we learn something else. I am the One "showing mercy," a participle again, it's My character to do this, and My character is to "show mercy to thousands of generations for those who love Me," and so we now have an asymmetry in how God works in history. And this is very important because this collides with a theory that has been going on in church history, double predestination, which looks upon God as judging and saving in the same sense, they're just equal and opposite sides with those arrows still the same.

But if you look at the text here there's an interesting difference, that God is reluctant to judge and very happy to bless. That is a revelation and it occurs not just here, as I list in the handout, Genesis 12:3, "I will curse him that curses, I will bless them," the cursing goes on a singular noun, the blessing goes on a plural noun. In Matthew 25:41 where Jesus talks about the final judgment, fire is prepared for the devil and his angels, and incidentally, men are also put there, as though there's a reluctance to send men to a hellish destiny of eternal fires that were prepared for the devil and his angels, not for man, but man goes there because he shares their destiny by choice.

In Romans 9:22-23 there's a difference between being prepared for destruction, it's a middle participle there, it's the idea of preparing

themselves for destruction, versus those which He prepared beforehand for glory. There's a decided asymmetry in how God acts in history and it's picked up here in this language if you want to see it.

Now going back here there's a little vocabulary issue that I want to address. In the word "showing mercy to the thousands," in your handout I've translated that showing or "doing chesed to the thousands of the lovers of Me and keepers of My commandments." I want to explain chesed, showing mercy, doing that. There are two Hebrew expressions for love; they have a different meaning, there's a different nuance to these. The one, chesed, is a noun, it's not a verb, and you do it. Now how do you do chesed? Doing chesed means loyalty to a defined relationship; it's covenant loyalty, in other words, it has for its context the fact that I have an obligation and I carry out that obligation; that's chesed love. Keep in mind that this is just the Old Testament way of looking at it. It doesn't correspond to the way we think of some romantic goo; we're talking about covenant loyalty. Businessmen, in the Old Testament, if they kept their contracts, they would be called chesed, they do chesed; you do chesed when you make an agreement with someone and you carry out the agreement; that's chesed.

Now the other word is ahav, and that means to choose to love someone, and that means you choose, and there's not a covenant framework there at all, you just chose to do that. So there's a difference in the nuance to those two.

Okay, we've come down and we're going to stop right here at verse 10 because this is as far as we can cover it without speeding through. On your handout at the end I have a summary of this passage, so let's go through that summary. The basis of the nation's entire existence is Yahweh, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Covenant Keeper, because He has kept the Abrahamic Covenant, He is the Deliverer from the ancient superpower Egypt; He is a Covenant Maker in a new dispensation. Remember He says I made this covenant and it wasn't with your fathers. So those are all the qualities of the God who is the basis of this nation's existence. And now you know why that's so important because we started the night here, this lesson, by pointing out why, when you dismiss that, when you sidetrack that you wind up messing up the rest of it. It's build on that foundation.

Then you'll see where it says it solves the metaphysical question: What is the meaning and purpose of the nation's existence? That's a good question, What is the meaning and the purpose of Israel's existence? That's a legitimate question, it's a fundamental question. The answer: Israel is a special demonstration nation for God in the flow of human history... it is not a random, meaningless group of people embedded in a cycle of Mother Nature going nowhere. Now those are the two views. What people like to do is they like to rip off pieces of the Bible that give them comfort and don't take the foundation. And that, by the way, explains our own national history. We just said tonight the third and fourth generations are them that hate Me. Now if you think back, what is the dates of our fourth generation; now think back to your own family? Your grandparents, most of your grandparents probably lived at the turn of the century. When did your great-grandparents live? At the end of the 19th century. And when did higher criticism come and when did liberalism start infiltrating the church and when was Charles Darwin active? In the

days of your great-grandparents. And it has only taken four generations to get where we are now. See, it play out.

So the metaphysical question has been answered. The epistemological question: How are they supposed to attain truth and justify the claim that their ethic and political structures are more righteous than any other nation? The answer: a revelation-based contractual relationship with God to be administered with a sequence of prophets down through history. That's the answer. And that solves the ethical question: Who is to tell the nation how to live? And the answer is Yahweh. So you see the basic questions are answered here in this text. You don't have to go all the way into the deep philosophical realms, the questions have pretty easy answers. And if you fudge and you dismiss the Scriptures you wind up going all over Robin Hood's barn and trying to find an answer and you never come up with one. See, that's why most of us who became Christians later in life became Christians. It's so funny, sometimes you talk to a non-Christian and they act like you don't really understand what being a non-Christian is. Well, yes I do because I was once one. I have an advantage, I was a non-Christian and I've been a Christian, you've never been a Christian so I know both sides of the defense, you only know one.