


END-TIMES ISSUES



#94 Commandment #5 – Reverence/fear (2).

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

A N D B E Y O N D I

A PERSON'S ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS PARENTS WILL STRONGLY INFLUENCE HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD.

- It may be patterned after his perception of his parents.
- It may in some ways be an "opposite," implying a *rebellion against* that perception.

God will ignore my sin.

I can trust God. I think God is a mean, cruel tyrant. I can't trust God.

I need God. Actually, I am god. I hate my parents... I hate God.

I don't need God. God is too loving to send people to hell! God exists to make me happy!

- NO family situation will be perfect, because both parents and children sin. So, Scripture teaches us what the relationship *should* be like, and how to change one's attitude, to whatever degree necessary.
- ★ *This applies to ALL interactions that involve authority.* ★

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

As spoken by God on Mount Sinai, and reaffirmed by Moses many years later:

"Honor your father and your mother, ..."

Exodus 20:12a and Deuteronomy 5:16a (NIV)

As restated in Leviticus 19 – the context being our *need* for holiness in all of life:

"Each of you must respect your mother and father ..."

Leviticus 19:3a (BSB)

* (In most passages, this word is translated as "fear.")

We have noted that these two words – "honor" and "respect" (or "fear") – are used in Scripture to describe the attitude we need toward *both* God and parents. So, we have begun to examine what these two words mean.

SO FAR... We've looked at the concept of "honor."

- Derived from a basic root word that refers to "heaviness" or "weightiness," honor focuses on the "weightiness" of a person's dignity, respect, authority, recognition, etc.
- When applied to God, it is often translated as "glory," and can refer to his being, as well as his presence, name, moral perfection, etc.
- To honor someone (or God) involves both the *internal attitude* of recognizing the individual's value, as well as the appropriate *external response*.
- Our obligation to honor someone does not depend on our opinion about that person, or whether or not they wronged us. When people sin against us, we shouldn't retaliate by sinning against them!
- Though many Scripture passages refer to honor, *commands* are relatively few. Jews were given the fourth commandment (which represents *all* situations in which people are to be honored). The Gentiles were given many applications of that command.

SO FAR... We introduced the word "respect" or "fear."

- Except in a few situations, the word is usually translated as "fear" (or in some contexts, "afraid" or "awesome").
- Originally, the word "fear" had both positive and negative connotations, depending on the object that was being feared. It was considered *good* to fear God and parents (and other legitimate authorities).
- In the past century, most people have ceased to acknowledge the "positive" aspect of "fear" – even in reference to God. It is now considered a *wrong* attitude to have; and it's usually assumed that the one being feared is in the wrong. This change has gone along with an increasing rebellion against authority – whether God or human – and the exaltation of self above others.
- We can use a different word – such as "reverence" or "respect" – but we need to *avoid* changing the actual meaning of the concept (even though the world rejects it). If something needs to change, it is our view, not God's Word!

HOW is this concept of "FEAR" used in Scripture?

- Like most words, the word "fear" will have a range of meanings. In this case, the range is not very great... definitely *much* smaller than the "weightiness" concept that is associated with the word "honor."
- ✓ **Being afraid or fearful of something** (such as a person or thing, situations in life, etc.). These are often events where Scripture ① records a fact that occurred, or else ② describes a situation in which we are told to *not* be afraid.
- ✓ **A sense of awe, or even dread**, when confronted by something that is greatly overwhelming, or beyond one's comprehension.
- ✓ **A good response to an authority.** (The word is often used this way.) When referring to our response to authority, we need to recognize that the word can have the *same meaning*, whether applied to God, or to people. This is demonstrated by two passages, where the *one* word "fear" is used, and is applied to both God and people in the same sentence. (THE VERSES) →

EXAMPLE: The word "fear" used *once* and applied to *both* God and people, in the same sentence:

As a FACT: ... all the people greatly **feared** the LORD and Samuel.

1 Samuel 12:18b (BSB)

As a COMMAND: My son, **fear** the LORD and the king ...

Proverbs 24:21a (BSB)

- ✓ The main difference will be one of intensity or priority. God is *uncreated*; people are *created*. If there is ever a conflict between God and human authority, fear of *God* takes priority. (There shouldn't *ever* be a conflict between the two. When it occurs, it is because of *sin*.)

- This fear of authority can be positive or negative, depending on one's standing with that authority. Do we love or hate the authority? Obey or disobey? Do we bow in submission, or rise up in rebellion? *Have we earned blessing or judgment?* By our choices, we get to choose whether it will be awe-inspired reverence... or horrifying terror.

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CAUTION!!



- It seems that, every time someone mentions the need to submit to authority, some people will *automatically* conclude that this entitles authorities to abuse those who are under them.
- Remember that the Ten Commandments represent *categories* of commands, instructions and examples. In this *category* are instructions that tell us how *authorities* are to treat those who are under them – and *these verses are just as true and obligatory, as are the others*.
- However, in most situations, Scripture seems to focus *first* on those who are *under* authority... and *then* on the authority.
- If you are under authority, and are sinning, you have no basis for wanting the authority to *stop* sinning. Also, you cause the rightness or wrongness of the authority's actions to become blurred; and because of your sin, some of their response to you may then be *deserved*.

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OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE "FEAR" CONCEPT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Fear of God:

- Fear of God is **commanded** about 20 times.
- Fear of God is **stated as a fact**, obligation, etc., about 30 times.
- **Statements about people who fear God** – about 60 times. This includes statements about receiving blessings, the value of having this fear, the *fact* that God's people have this fear... (About 1/3 of these statements are directed toward specific people or groups of people.)
- There are about 9 references to **the absence of the fear of God**. All of these references state or imply that *absence* of fear is evil.
- **Other uses of the word, related to God:** The word is also linked to God's name, his deeds, the tabernacle (i.e., the place where his visible presence resided), his *awesome* nature, etc.

There are **many** commands that tell us we **must** fear God.

There are **no** commands that tell us to **not** fear God.

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Fear of people, things, circumstances:

- (Many passages mention this; some use the word "afraid.")
- Sometimes it is just **stated as a fact**. These passages do not necessarily imply that the fear is wrong. Some of these describe situations where fear is the *right and necessary* response to have.
- Sometimes it refers to a situation where the fear is **a wrong response**. The passage may include the command, "Do not fear."
- There are two instances in which we are **commanded** to fear people.

(THE VERSES) →

A basic rule that will help us in understanding how to apply Scripture:

- ✓ **COMMANDS** are to influence our actions.
- ✓ **FACTS** are to influence our thinking.
- The specific ways they should influence us will depend on the context. Also, under the New Covenant, some of the Old Covenant *commands* no longer apply to us. They would still be important... but for us, they would be treated as *facts* to influence our thinking.

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Old Testament COMMANDS to fear people:

"Each of you must **respect** [= "**fear**"] your mother and father ..."

Leviticus 19:3a (BSB)

My son, **fear** the LORD and the king ...

Proverbs 24:21a (BSB)

SOME PEOPLE MAY REPLY:

THAT'S "OLD TESTAMENT" STUFF! THE NEW TESTAMENT IS ABOUT LOVE, NOT FEAR!

SO, "FEAR" HAS BEEN DONE AWAY WITH!

ESPECIALLY "FEAR OF GOD"!

- Those who make this claim often quote (out of context) 1 John 4:18:

There is **no fear in love**. But perfect love drives out fear, because **fear has to do with punishment**.

1 John 4:18a (NIV)

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- What does this passage *really* say? **NOT** that "love and fear are incompatible opposites"! Read the whole passage! It tells us:

- ① When a person's life has been *changed* by God, God's love begins to affect how that person lives.
- ② God's love begins to express itself in the person's life; and the person begins to love the way Jesus did.
- ③ The presence of this love is *evidence* that God is living in the person. *Since God is living in him, he no longer has to fear punishment at the coming day of judgment.*

- The New Testament often mentions the "fear" concept (though not as often as it mentions the "honor/glory" concept). In some situations, the fear is *condemned*; in others, it is *required*.
- Examples of *necessary* fear include *both* of these:

- ✓ **Fear of God.** ✓ **Fear of people (authority)**... But you should *not* need to have fear of punishment, as the consequence of doing wrong – Romans 13:3.

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OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE "FEAR" CONCEPT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.Fear of God:

- It is **commanded** 4 times.

- ✓ **By Jesus:** Fear God, not people.

Do not be **afraid** of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, **fear** the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10:28 (BSB); a similar statement in Luke 12:5.

- ✓ **By Paul:** Gentiles who say they're saved shouldn't consider themselves superior to the unsaved Jews, who are like branches broken off the "tree of Israel."

They were broken off because of unbelief, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be **afraid**. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will certainly not spare you either.

Romans 11:20b-21 (BSB)

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- [Fear of God commanded ...]

- ✓ **By Peter:** Fear God. (Also has the word "honor," applied to people.)

Treat everyone with high regard: Love the brotherhood of believers, **fear** God, **honor** the king.

1 Peter 2:17 (BSB)

- ✓ **By the angel who proclaims the eternal gospel (good news):** (Also uses the word "glory" – the concept of "honor," applied to God.)

Then I saw another angel flying overhead, with the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

And he said in a loud voice, "**Fear** God and give Him **glory**, because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship the One who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and the springs of waters."

Revelation 14:6-7 (BSB)

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- It is **stated as a fact** several times. Here are a few of them:

- ✓ A reference to saved Gentiles – "God fearers" – in the book of Acts.
- ✓ It was associated with church growth – Acts 9:31.
- ✓ It is linked to becoming perfect in holiness – 2 Corinthians 7:1.
- ✓ It needs to influence the way we submit to human authorities and the way we work for them – Ephesians 5:21; Colossians 3:22.
- ✓ If we understand the fear of God, it will influence the way we live *now*. Christ's love (which is in saved people) will compel us!

Since, then, we know what it is to **fear** the Lord, we try to persuade others. ... For Christ's love compels us, ... We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:11a, 14a, 20b (NIV)

- ✓ Having this fear *now* is linked to eternal rewards – Revelation 11:18.
- ✓ In the end, *all* will fear God and will worship him, because of his righteous deeds – Revelation 15:4.

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- The works of God** were associated with fear. At times, this was a feeling of awe, amazement and wonder.

- ✓ Jesus' and the apostle's miracles often left people filled with awe.
- ✓ Sometimes, the "fear" was a more fearful or terrifying awe, such as when Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead – Acts 5:5, 11.

- **Those who don't fear God?** The wicked. In *eternity*, they will... but in *this present life*, they won't (unless they repent).

- ✓ The unjust judge – Luke 18:2, 4; the unrepentant thief on the cross – Luke 23:40.

- ✓ All sinners – which includes *us* – unless we have repented:

"There is no **fear** of God before their eyes."

Romans 3:18 (BSB)

(This is a quote from Psalm 36:1, which tells us that this describes "the sinfulness of the wicked.")

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Fear of People/Things:

- It is **mentioned as a fact**, many times. It may be for a good reason, or for a bad one. (Context typically shows us how to understand it.)

- ✓ This could be a fear of people, of terrifying circumstances, of unexpected miracles, etc.
- ✓ Examples of this are found throughout the New Testament.

- Sometimes people were **commanded to not fear**.

- ✓ This would include *some* (not all) of the situations mentioned above.
- ✓ Sometimes, a command to not fear may be an instruction or an encouragement. (This often focuses on *not fearing* how the *world* may treat you, because you are a follower of Jesus.)
- ✓ Most of these passages occur in the gospels.

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- Statements about "not fearing" people or circumstances** are found several times in the writings of the apostles. These are *not* commands; some are instructions that teach us how to live (or *not* live).

- ✓ A few references to "not fearing" are *just expressing facts*, not necessarily implying that we should or shouldn't follow the example. But others have a clear reference to us. (EXAMPLES)

- ✓ Scripture tells us we have no reason to fear ...

- ♦ ... *rulers*, if we do what is good, instead of doing evil – Romans 13:3-4.

- ♦ ... *circumstances*, when God is our helper – Hebrews 13:6 (referring to Psalm 118:6-7).

- ✓ The Spirit that God has given us does *not* turn us back into slaves to fear; rather, it turns us into adopted sons of God – Romans 8:15.

- ✓ God's love, which is within us (his children), gives us *no* reason to fear the future day of judgment – 1 John 4:18.

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- Finally, there are several passages where people are **commanded to fear something**. These are found in the writings of the apostles.
- ✓ **Fear in the way we live or "work out" our salvation.** The following two passages mention *God's role* in saving us and enabling us to grow in our salvation. But they also show us that *our human responsibility is a serious matter!* The "fear" that is to be a part of our life is not "anxiety," but an awareness of the serious implications of our actions. We need to take seriously the *fact* that *genuine* salvation will influence our values and choices – our willingness to *follow* Jesus! We must pursue this change, *fearing* the alternative!
 - "Working out" our salvation with *fear*, because God is working in us, to make it possible – Philippians 2:12-13.
 - Living our lives like "foreigners" in this world (i.e., not accepting its values), *fearfully* aware that we have an *obligation* to be holy, and that our works will be judged impartially; also aware of the immense cost that Jesus paid, to make all this possible – 1 Peter 1:14-19 (+ context).

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[Commands to "fear" something ...]

- ✓ **Fear of falling into sin:** Elders (church leaders) who persist in sin should be publicly rebuked, so that others won't be inclined to *also* sin – 1 Timothy 5:19-20.
- ✓ **Fear in matters related to abandoning the faith** (the goal being for it to not happen).
 - Fear of not* entering the "eternal rest" that God has prepared for us. These people were tempted to give-up their loyalty to Jesus, because of the persecution they had received. They were in danger of "falling short" of that rest. They needed to be encouraged to remain faithful – Hebrews 4:1+.
 - We should try to rescue those who are going astray. But we also need to *fear* the potential of becoming "contaminated" by the situation; for we could also be tempted to go astray – Jude 1:23.
- ✓ **Fear/respect in the way we respond** to those who speak maliciously about our good behavior – 1 Peter 3:15 + context. (Choosing to *respond* with evil behavior is *not* an option.)

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Hopefully, by now, we know that *not all fear is bad*. A good and necessary type of fear exists! We may need to remind ourselves of this fact, as we look at the commands to "fear" certain *people*. We may choose to use the word "revere" or "respect." This may be OK, if we realize that it's the *same* word used to describe our attitude toward *God*. (This fact should influence our response.)

- **Commands to fear people:** In a small number of passages, we are told to fear those who are in authority above us. These commands are found in the writings of *both* Peter and Paul.
- ✓ First, **the basic principle:** There are people we *owe* fear/respect to. Otherwise, Paul wouldn't have said this:

Pay everyone what you owe him: taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, **respect** to whom **respect** is due, honor to whom honor is due.

Romans 13:7 (BSB)

(This word translated as "respect" is the *same* word translated as "fear" in other passages.)

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- ✓ Here are **two examples** of what this means. Both are applications of the Fifth Commandment *principle* (which is represented by the command: "Honor your father and your mother").
 - Wives are to fear/respect their husbands... just as much as the husbands are to love their wives – Ephesians 5:33 + context. Their behavior should be characterized by this fear/respect – 1 Peter 3:2 + context.
 - Slaves are to obey their masters with "fear and trembling." This is the same phrase used in reference to "working out your salvation." Both passages mention "work"; and here, it probably indicates the seriousness of doing this *work for Christ* – Ephesians 6:5. They are to submit to their master, even if the master is harsh – 1 Peter 2:18. **Today, this would apply to employees and employers.**

How should we respond to these verses?

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Responding to these verses:

- Today, the typical church-goer is repulsed by these statements. Many reject them, even though *both* apostles Peter and Paul stated these things.
- People who don't like what these passages say will often attack them by making various claims. EXAMPLES:
 - ☒ They may claim that interpreting the passages this way permits the authority to do as he pleases (i.e., to totally abuse those under his authority). [Since the immediate context *prohibits* the authority from doing this, such claims are false statements.]
 - ☒ They may assume that the apostles were *afraid* to go against the *social norms* of the day. They included such commands, only because it was the accepted view in that society. But society today is more advanced and civilized; so those verses no longer apply. [In reality, the apostles *never* compromised truth to appease the world.]
 - ☒ They may completely deny the authority of Scripture, and simply claim that the Bible is *wrong*.

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Scripture places responsibility on **both** the authority *and* those under authority. This includes...

- ✓ Parents *and* children. ✓ Husband *and* wife.
- ✓ Master *and* slave (today: employer *and* employee).
- God tells *each* what they must do, and holds *each* accountable for how they do (or don't do) it.
- Neither* has a "right" to respond in a sinful way, if the other chooses to sin.

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FOR THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO DISAGREE WITH THESE SCRIPTURES...

- We are going to focus specifically on what the text of Scripture says.
- You have to decide how you want to respond to it. You can accept it, ignore it, openly reject it, or "discover" a new meaning for the text (totally unknown to past generations of Christians). You can be creative in a number of other ways. *It's your choice.*

24

[Combining both O.T. & N.T. information.]	WHO SHOULD WE HONOR?	WHO SHOULD WE FEAR?
Jews were told: (mainly the basic principle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God • Father and mother (= the Fifth Commandment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God • Mother and father (= the Fifth Commandment) • The king
Gentiles were told: (mainly <i>applications</i> of the basic principle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God • Anyone it is owed to • The king • All people • Each other (Christians) • Father and mother • Wives • Masters • Widows • Well-serving leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God • Anyone it is owed to • Husbands • Masters

Both the basic principle and the applications teach us about the Fifth Commandment category.

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HONOR AND FEAR ... THE DIFFERENCE?

According to Scripture, both are legitimate (and necessary) responses to God and human authority.

- Though the "honor" concept occurs more often than the "fear" concept, *both* are found in Scripture – and *both* are applied to God *and* to people.
- To accept this requires us to acknowledge that a *good* type of "fear" *does* exist. We may choose to use a more "acceptable" term, such as "reverence" or "respect"; but in doing so, we need to be careful that we *don't downplay the seriousness of the issue*.
- In this context, these two concepts appear to have a similar focus. But the "fear" concept is more *intense* and recognizes the *power* of the authority. Both words imply the need to respond appropriately to the authority (whether God or people). The "fear" concept tells us that *how we respond is a very serious matter!*

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HOW should we respond??

OUR MISSION:

Examine your attitude toward authority – both God and people.

- ⇒ Compare what Scripture says to *your way* of responding to authority. ⇒ *Are there things you need to do differently?*

Pursue having the fear of God.

- ⇒ Scripture tells us that those who lack it are **wicked**. (Doing this will influence our attitude toward *human* authority.)

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Our goal

NEXT TIME:

⇒ To see how the Fifth Commandment principle applies to life.

The teachings of Scripture, which focus on the various relationships between different levels of society all belong to this Fifth Commandment category.

This includes:

- ✓ Authorities
- ✓ Those under authority
- ✓ People who would be considered "equals"

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We live in a world that wants to "redefine" the teachings of Scripture *out of existence*.

We need a "renewed mind" (Romans 12:2), in order to successfully oppose it.

(This will be an *ongoing* need, since the world is unrelenting in its attack of the truth.)

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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