



“gods & murder”

“Realities”

September 20, 2015

Courage Church

We are in our second week of our series on “Realities.” It is a series on the ten commandments. The word in Exodus for commandments is

the word *dabar*, and *dabar* actually means “words.” - We talked last week how the Hebrew people consider the Ten Commandments to really be “A Ten Word Ketubah” - a marriage contract.

And the Greek words for the ten commandments is “*deka logos*” - also meaning, “The Ten Words” and again, last week we talked about that is where we get the name “The Decalogue” from, which is a very traditional name for the Ten Commandments, and “logue,” which is a form of *logos*, and is actually where the English word “Logic” comes from, which is rooted in “reality.”

Its like the saying:

“It’s only logical.”

So that is the way that we are approaching the Ten Commandments... These are not laws. These are realities. These are things that in and of themselves are toxic. Whether you get caught or not, doing these things will destroy you, and they will destroy your relationship with God. It is only logical.

This is not as a set of rules that God gave the Israelites in a fit rage to bind them to a command that they could never fulfill, but instead, its the terms of his marriage to them.

So if you missed last week, please please go back on the website or the podcast, and watch or listen to the first message, it lays a huge amount of framework for where we are going over this 8 week series.

So if you would open your bibles with me to Mark 12:28-34:

The Great Commandment

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

prayer

Observing Jews wake up every single morning, and they quote this verse. “Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” They say it at everything. Of course, they aren’t quoting Jesus, they are quoting the verse that Jesus is quoting, which is Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

Jesus answered the scribes question here in Mark, by quoting an old testament passage known as the SHEMA.

They ask him, “What is the most important thing?”

and he quotes Deuteronomy. He says, what is most important? Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and

with all your strength.’ But Jesus adds the second part: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

and the scribe responds to Jesus, and says, “you are right. He is one. God is one. And there is no-one else besides him. You know the scriptures. We can move on now.

It seems this would sum it up. If we could just grasp this concept fully, with all of our hearts, we could wrap up the service now, and we could all go to lunch. God comes first. People come second, and you are included in the second, but you are not above it. You treat people just like you would treat yourself... If you believed this, and we lived this, we wouldn’t need the Ten Commandments. We would already be doing them.

But the problem is that we don’t grasp this. And that is why we are still hurting each other. We are still talking bad about each other, we are still gossiping and slandering, and belittling each other.

We can’t even get our mind around “love your neighbor as yourself” - and if you can’t love your neighbor as yourself, could you possibly love God with all of your heart?

Moses wrote the SHEMA in Deuteronomy six... its the chapter right after he gives us the Ten Commandments... Its almost like he was doing the same thing that Jesus does... he is saying, “Here are Ten words to live by.” But if ten is too many, here is one.

Just do this. If you do this, you will do all of that, whether you have memorized it, or not. But since you are having so much trouble doing this, go back, and read that... Remember your covenant. Remember the Ketubah that you signed with God, because it shows you how to live the SHEMA.

The Ten Commandments (numbered)

For just a moment, lets talk about numbers. Because there are ten of them, in the Ten Commandments.

When most of us think of the Ten Commandments, and we get a picture in our mind for what they are, we get a picture like the one on our stain glass window above my head. Two stone tablets, filled with Roman numeral numbers carved into it signifying each of the commandments.

But that is *not* the way that it was originally written. In fact, as you probably know, Rome had not even been founded yet, when the Ten Commandments were given to Moses. So there simply was not any such thing as Roman Numerals.

So if you were to look at the tablets in Hebrew, you would think it would look more like this:



Obviously, this is just a drawing, on the right side on the top is the first letter, *alef*, then *bet*... and all the way to “*yod*” which is the 10th and smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. So in Hebrew, the first ten letters are the first ten numbers.






Do you know how when you are writing an outline, you will create points like this: 1. 2. 3.

and then under point 1. (if you have more points under that point) You will go: A. B. C. and each letter would represent a number.

Well there were no numbers in the Hebrew alphabet, so A. would represent 1. B. would represent 2. etc.

So numerically if you were to look at the way we read Hebrew now, this would be how you write the first ten numbers, But even this is likely not how it would have originated.

But going back even further, the Hebrew language originated as pictures... if you want to research this more you would want to look up “paleo Hebrew” or “Hebrew word pictures.” Though we don’t know exactly the way it was written on those tablets, the first ten Hebrew letters back then would have looked more like these (they may have varied as they were hand-carved):

Name	Pictograph
Aleph	
Bet	
Gimzel	
Dalet	
Hey	
Vav	
Zayin	
Chet	
Tet	
Yod	

The Hebrew language began as a picture language. This is where the letters later came from, and there is a fascinating connection between each letters “picture,” and the commandment that followed. (see image on the right) - every letter is a picture, and every picture tells a story.

Now, I need to say this before we get into this. We are trying to look at this ancient text with fresh eyes, by doing our best to look at it from the eyes of those who would have seen it in the first place.

And when we get into things like word pictures, they can be very enlightening, and we will mention the picture associated with each “reality” however we will not spend a lot of time on them. They can bring some amazing things to life and shed a perspective that maybe we never saw before... but they are not stand-alone principles. The way that we associate meaning with the image is not in the place of the bible, and it should never be taken so. If, in some case, the picture seems to go against what the bible is clearly saying, we throw it out. I haven’t come across anything like that yet, but in reality, we are trying to learn from modern translations of ancient scripts, so this is not where we put our stock, but it can be, as you will see, incredibly enlightening.

The bible is a stand alone source that when read in its proper context can answer every question that you have. We believe that the bible in and of itself is enough, but sometimes, it helps us to understand how it was written and why, and there is very little doubt as to this being the way it was originally written. It is widely held that paleo Hebrew was used until the Babylonian Exile. The Orthodox Jews believe that they stopped being used after

the Exodus (which, if that is the case, the prophetic nature of the meanings is rather fascinating), but either way, they are worth looking at.

Because just like we learned last week, if we just read the passage at face value and don't know anything that was happening when it was written, then it will seem like a pile of rules handed down to a rebellious people to keep them in line, when in reality, is not the case at all.

The Ten Commandments are connected to each other very closely.

The Hebrew first is connected to the sixth. (and really we can make a connection between the Protestant first as well)

The second is connected to the seventh.

The third is connected to the eighth.

The fourth is connected to the ninth.

The fifth is connected to the tenth,

They all, in one way or another, link back to the first, and the tenth really connects all of them as we will see, later.

They really build off of each other. If you are having a problem with honor, which is the 5th commandment, its likely tied to one of the first four. If you are coveting, it is because something is missing from the first nine.

So today, we are looking at the first, and the sixth.

The first commandment says "You shall have no other gods before me" and the sixth commandment says "You shall not murder."

So we are calling today:

"gods and murder."

The Hebrew first commandment is simply "I am the Lord your God who brought you OUT of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." and the first command as we know it, is "You shall have no other gods before me."

The first letter in the Hebrew alphabet is alef - and like we said, the first letter is also the first number, so the word picture that is connected with 1 is the ox head.

It represents what gives strength... what comes first. The head. The head of the house. The leader. "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery..."

"Have no other gods before me."

God. Comes. First.

God needs to be leading you. He is in charge. The one who brought you out, comes first.

Murder:

The word murder is the Hebrew word *rä·tsakh* and is used in the bible at various times for "murder" as well as for "kill" but almost every aspect of the definition involves premeditated killing or revenge — the old King James version translated it as "kill" but modern translations have corrected it to say "murder" because in the same book (Exodus 21:12-14, 21:16, 22:18) as well as others in the Torah (Deuteronomy 22:25-26, 22:22, Leviticus 20:10) it speaks of instances when someone would be killed as a punishment for an awful crime they that have committed, and it is rather clear that the sixth commandment is not thou shall not kill, but rather, thou shall not murder.

Jesus quotes the sixth command in the sermon on the mount, in Matthew 5 and it is one of the verses that has lead to people believing that Jesus was a pacifist, which, where I believe this is grounds for that belief, I do not believe that He was.

What I do believe is that Jesus has called us to live radical, radical lives, and I believe that Jesus has called us to love so much, so deeply, and so radically, that we value other lives over our own, or *at least* as much as our own. But that being said, we have an obligation to preserve life, so the idea that we could never defend ourselves against an attacker or should turn a blind eye if someone is hurting someone else when we physically *could* do something, is lunacy.

Psalm 82:4 says to “Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.

Ezekiel 33:6 talks about how if a watchmen sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet... if he does nothing... and someone is killed, that person’s blood is on the watchmen’s hands.... on the hands on the one, who did *nothing*.

There is a concept that I will explain later today that really sums up this whole concept, but first let me tell you a story that I hope can frame it a little for you:

During our time in New York, actually, the longest stretch of time we were living there, our family lived in a beach town on a Peninsula across a bridge from Brooklyn called Rockaway Beach.

It is home to more New York City firefighters and police officers than any other New York neighborhood. I guess the breeze of the ocean and the 13 mile distance from Manhattan gave them enough break from the pace of the City to feel good about raising their families there, so that is where a lot of them settled.

If you walk around the Rockaway’s, you will find that there are memorials, all over the neighborhood, to fire fighters and officers that gave their lives on 9/11. The anniversary of it each year is one of the most sobering things you could ever experience.



I remember sitting at a playground a couple of years ago while Milly played, and Dawn and I started talking to these two ladies who were there with their kids, and we thought, “oh, the kids are playing so well together, maybe we should make a connection and they could have playdates.” So as we started to ask about what part of the neighborhood they lived in, we found out they were both from out of state. They lived hundreds of miles away, but every year, on September 11th, they return to the Rockaway’s to remember their brother. Who they lost all those years ago on that fateful day.

Everyone there lost someone. And just about everyone there that lost someone, lost someone who went *in* after it was hit.

Knowing, that building is not going to stand much longer.

Knowing, that building is on fire.

Knowing, there are people still stuck in that building.

And so they went in with the mindset that “the life of every person in that falling building matters just as much as mine.”

Knowing, that every life we don’t save, will have a *forever* impact on many many more lives.

Knowing, that someone murdered a lot of people today. But if there is a chance to save some of them, it is worth risking mine for... maybe even losing mine for... because “I don’t matter *more* than them.”

We have an obligation, and God gave us this amazing instinct, to preserve life.

Do you think, honestly, if that battle comes home, and hits the ground floor in the streets of Detroit, we are going to let our brothers be murdered and our children be taken, all because we don’t know how to read the red letter letters? Total pacifism is not what the 6th commandment is suggesting nor is Jesus suggesting it when he quoted it.

Jesus at one point told his disciples to arm themselves. He told them to be ready. (Luke 22:36) - he told them, if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak so you can buy a sword... and then when the disciples said to him “Look, Lord, here are two swords” Jesus replied to them: “It is enough.”

But then, and this is crucial, when they begin to use the sword in the garden of Gethsemane, he stops them, and he says “Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me?” (John 18:10-11)

What is he saying? He is saying, in essence: “We have a right to use self defense against this unlawful arrest being made right now, but we are laying down that right for the sake of a greater good. - if you execute *that right*, in this moment, it will actually prevent me from doing the very thing that I came here to do.”

Its not pacifism.

Its actually much *deeper* than that. Its actually, in many ways, *more extreme* than that.

We did a whole series on this. Jesus always took it back to the heart. He taught to never, ever take revenge on someone... but when I read that, I read that like the Ten Commandments, I read it as more of a reality. Because think about what that does to a persons heart? Jesus says that anyone who is *angry* (Matt. 5:22) with his brother will be liable to judgment... And the word he uses for anger, it means a slow burn. It doesn't mean you get mad, and then you figure it out.

It means you let it keep burning.

And how long can you let a fire burn inside of you before everything turns to ashes.

This is slowly destroying you.

And we have to wrap our brains around this. Around the reality of how much of sin is inward. Is there really any difference between the person who lets a slow burn keep burning against someone else in their heart, and a person who actually takes someone else's life?

I dare say in many cases, the only difference is circumstantial.

What opportunities were right in front of you when that slow burn caught fire? When the whole thing finally just went up in flames?

We talked last week about how everybody loves Jesus, right? Because he came in and he shows us, "its not about the rules." and what we saw by the end of last week, is even when God first gave these commandments to Moses, it was not about the rules. Its not like he changed it, and suddenly made it "not about the rules" - he just showed us in a new way what is was, all along.

Jesus comes along and everyone seems to think he made it all so much easier, and what people so often fail to realize is that he takes "The letter of the law," the written command, and he suddenly brings into play something even more drastic. "The Spirit of the law." We talked about this in our "Intentions" series. How in Jesus' day, the Rabbis were teaching, "you can look, but you better not touch." you can commit iniquity (inward motivation) but you can never, ever act on it. You can never commit a transgression (an outward action)... the thought was that as long as you followed the letter, you were good. But Jesus came and added unto us the "Spirit of the law" which says that if you even lust, you are guilty. If you harbor hatred toward your brother or you call him a fool, you are just as guilty.

But why?

Lets look at it. Matthew 5:21-22:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever **insults** his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You *fool!*' will be liable to the hell of fire."

A key to understanding this verse is the word that Jesus uses that we translate as insults. Its an aramaic word, the word *rhaka*. And this is the only time in the whole bible that this word is used... and in fact the old King James version actually says, "whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of hell fire."

rhaka basically means that you are "empty headed" - but there is more to it than just a definition... you are telling the other person... you are here. I am here. You are not worth my time. Just saying the word, it sounds like the noise you would make in your throat as you are working up to "spit" - the idea is you are essentially saying to the other person "you aren't even worth spitting on"

Have you ever gotten angry with a person, and, maybe eventually you walked away, but you walked away with this thought in your head... Or maybe you even said this to your buddy as you both are leaving, or to yourself under your breath:

"They are not worth it."

and I am sure you meant well. You were just trying to calm yourself down, but that was the way you convinced yourself...

They are not worth getting worked up over... and where that may seem like a noble thing to do, or it may seem like you are taking the higher ground, really what you are saying is what? You are worth *more than them*. That is why it is always worth it to work out our problems. The bible tells us to not let the sun go down on our anger. (Ephesians 4:26) it says, Be angry, and don't sin." - Its okay to be angry as long as it leads to something healthy... but you have to work it out with your brother. Work it out, lest you convince yourself that the other person is actually worth "Not working it out with."

Don't *rhaka*.

Then Jesus says this, he says “whoever says, ‘You *fool!*’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”

The word for fool is the word *moros* - its where we get the word “moron” from... but what it is actually saying is that you are a “fool *morally*.”

What does that mean?

It means you are looking over a person, and making your own determination as to whether or not they are moral. Whether they are sinful, or not. Whether they deserve judgment, or *not*.

Why is this so deadly? Why is it so costly?

Because you would never murder someone that you didn't think was guilty of *something*. You would never murder someone that you think highly of, or you think is good. No, first, before you can ever murder someone, you first have to murder them in your mind. You have to kill their character, in your head. You have to convince yourself for whatever reason that they are evil or that the world would be better without them, or at least that it would be no worse off.

You have to convince yourself of their lack of worth.

We talked last week about how the Israelites were slaves, so when we read the Ten Commandments, we have to read it realizing who it was given to and what they were coming out of.

They had a very skewed, unhealthy perspective of what life actually should be, in fact, it was 430 years of slavery... so many of them had never known *anything* besides being treated that way. The Egyptians, they didn't treat them like people. If an Egyptian wanted to kill an Israelite, they killed them. There was not a consequence for that. The Egyptian culture had completely dehumanized the Israelites. Exodus 1 talks about this... How the Pharaoh saw that the Israelites were growing, and he saw it as a growing

threat, and so he developed a plan to oppress them and afflict them with heavy burdens and make their lives bitter.

He even somehow convinced his people to go along with a plan to kill all of the Israelite born boys. He had to engrain this in the Egyptian culture... “we are worth more than they are.”

“Their lives are not valuable. They are disposable.”

He had to train his own people, to see the Israelities through a different lens... one that saw them not as people but as objects that needed to be destroyed. It is what the Taliban did to convince men with families to fly airplanes into buildings. It is what Hitler did in Nazi Germany. He managed to shift the mindset of millions of people, to believing that the Jews were worth less than the Germans. In fact, he managed to convince the Nazi’s that the Jews were *evil*.

You can’t start a war any other way.

If the war is over land, you still have to convince yourself, and your nation, that you deserve that land, more than the another group of people does. If it is over oil, you have to convince yourself and your counterparts, “we deserve this oil.”

We deserve something that they have, and they don’t want to it give us. And whether or not any of us have ever physically killed anyone before, we are all guilty of this.

Of looking over a person, and where they are, and where you are, and concluding that “Where I am is more significant than where you are. The person I am is more significant than the person you are. My words mean more than your words. You are stupid, I am above you.”

And Jesus says, the person who looks at other people like that, is liable to hell.

Because what is a bigger problem in our world? Murder, or *rhaka*?

Its not about the transgression. That always comes later. Its not about the way you act on your feelings, The problem is that you can't control your feelings in the first place. The problem is that you think, in some way, that your life is worth more than someone else's.

If someone ultimately gets to the point in their life in which they commit murder against someone, they are saying, "I have more value than this person. "We are both created in the image of God, but I am worth more, than you." There is NO OTHER WAY to commit murder.

But we all get to that point whether we murder or not.

and if you think that you are better than someone else, then you are making yourself judge over someone else's worth.

You are making yourself *God*.

The word picture for the number six, the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet is vav, and the picture is of a nail. The concept is, a nail is used to establish something or connect something. It holds something together. And the only one who holds our world together is God. But if you choose to murder, you are disrupting what he has established. You are playing God.

And so suddenly, you are saying that the God that brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, is not "God enough" to bring justice himself. He is not "God enough" to know whether a person should live or die... And you are putting your desires, against God. Against the order in which God created the world.

In order to fully understand this, you have to understand the principle of the SHEMA. Jesus quoted it in Mark, the verse we read at the very beginning, and he was quoting it from Deuteronomy.

“Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

We get the second part, right? Love God. Its the first commandment. God comes first. Even in your old testaments, this is considered “The Greatest Commandment.” This is considered more important than the *deka logos*.

But the key that we tend to read right over, is in the first part. **Hear** Oh Israel. the Lord our God, the Lord is **one**.

There are three keys. Hear. God. and One.

“Hear” is the Hebrew word “*shema*”

First of all, when we read the word “hear,” we think that this is something we are listening too. We are *hearing* God... that He is one. But “Shema” does not merely mean that we have heard something... that it has entered our ears and thats it, but it also refers to the results of hearing, and *obeying*. We must do doers of the word, not hearers only. (James 1:22)

Obey, Oh Israel, the Lord our God.

The Lord is **one**.

This is huge. The number one, in English, is a singular, very lonely number. There is a very famous song by a band called “Three Dog Night” called “One is the loneliest number.” And it makes sense, right? But the Hebrew word that is used here, is NOT one, as in the first number. And the word God used here, is not “God” - singular. It is the word Elohim. God. Plural. It is the plural form of the word “El” Meaning, “The strong One.” - remember the word picture for the first commandment? A - Alef - the ox head - The one who gives strength.

Elohim is also the first name used for God in the entire bible. Genesis 1:1 says "In the beginning, God (plural) created the heavens and the earth."

So the SHEMA says: Obey, Oh Israel, the Lord our (plural) God, is one.

The word one is the word **echad**. And if you are going to understand the Ten Commandments for what they truly are, if you are going to understand them as "Realities," then first you MUST understand this concept.

The concept of "One."

It is the hardest principle to wrap our brains around probably in the entire bible. In fact, in some ways it is impossible to understand, because it speaks to the "triune" nature of God.

When God is creating man, in Genesis 1:26 it says "Let us make man in *our* image" The literal says "let *us* make one of our own kind."

So from the very beginning, there has been this mystery of God being more than one, yet, one.

Let *us*.
Make in *our* image.

In Matthew 3:16 when Jesus is baptized, it says that "The Spirit of God descended down on him like a dove" and he heard a voice saying "This is my beloved son, with who I am well pleased."

The **Father** Spoke, and the **Spirit** descended on him, equipping him for the ministry. And **Jesus**, of course, is the *logos* becoming flesh.

In John 10:30, Jesus says "I and the Father are *one*."

There is no denying, in reading the scriptures, that there is a oneness about the three different persons of God, but what we fail to realize is how much *we are like him*.

The definition of *Echad* is: “compound unity” - or “oneness from many.”

Its the same word used in Genesis 2:24 when talks about when a man and a woman get married, the two shall become one (*echad*)... Now, you know, in a marriage, its still two very different people. You don't become the same person after you get married, but you commit to each other, “we are one.” Nothing could ever happen to your spouse without it affecting you. Paul, (Ephesians 5:25-32) when he is talking about marriage, he says that husbands should love their wives like they love their own bodies, and the reason he gives? **For no one has ever hated their own flesh.**

Then he relates the whole thing to the church.

We may be different. But we are the same. We are a diverse group of unified people.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are a diverse group, but they are *echad*. They are *one*.

And that is an example for us.

We are all different. Yet we are the same. We are the same body. We are *one* body. And what happens to *one* of us, affects all of us. And this concept of diversity is one that I use when I am trying to describe the type of church that we want to have here... One that is filled with all sorts of people. People who are not like me, and people who are. People who are old, and people who are young. People who are rich. People who are poor. All living life together, in a place that socio-economics don't matter. Race doesn't matter. Politics don't matter. Age doesn't matter.

Just people. People matter.

and Jesus. Jesus matters.

So we look at the church (because that is what we are):

In John 17:6 Jesus says to the Father, "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world."

and he goes on to say (John 17:21) "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that you also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

What is Jesus saying? He is saying, the world, the outside world, will see how great God is, when they see his people. When they see that they are one. When they see that they are *echad*. And when they see that, they are seeing a reflection of what God is really like. There is a unity there (in the image of the church, Christ's bride) that not only represents the nature of God but it is actually being held together by it.

but if we really are that, if we really are *echad*, and we are all created in the image of God, and He is holding this whole thing together, then anything that we do against one another, will disrupt that *echad*.

It will disrupt that oneness.

Anything you do against someone else, you are doing to someone that you are supposed to have *oneness* with. Someone you may be different from, but you should still be in unity with.

Here is a simple example: Your body works perfectly together when its healthy. But If you break your leg, your whole body becomes immobilized. You can't just rely on your arms or your heart to pick up for where your leg is falling short during that time.

You have disrupted the entire flow of your life.

So if you commit murder, you aren't just taking out a member. You aren't just cutting off a leg, you are immobilizing the whole flow...It changes everything. you aren't just killing someone who was made in the image of God... you are literally disrupting *echad*. and you are playing the head. The Alef.

And you are going against the oneness that is holding everything together.

Colossians 1:15-17 says (talking about Jesus):

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him **all things hold together.**"

In this God, that is the image of the invisible God, everything is held together.

So what makes you think that you have the power to go against the ONE (the *echad*) that is holding everything together?

It will disrupt the flow, it will disrupt the *echad*, but it will destroy you.

And that is a reality.

Its not a speed limit sign. Its a low clearance 12 feet sign when you are driving a truck that you know is 15 feet tall.

It is a hazard placard. It's toxic.

We think that we can belittle people because we think that we are worth more than them. But the only reason that we would ever think that we are worth more than anybody, is because God is not first in our lives, there is a

“god” that is coming before the true God, and its the god of “you.” and the god of “me”...

If God was really first, you would understand that you don't need to “play him.” You don't need to hurt people. You don't need to slander them, or look down on them or convince yourself that you are better than them or that they deserve this or that, whether you just don't understand them, or they mistreated you, or you get a bad vibe from them, or you just think that you do more for Jesus than them...

We are all different, and yet, we are all the *same*. Its the Same creator. We are created in the same image, with the same price tag wrapped around our ankles.

You are not worth more than anybody else.

And yet you are so so so valuable.

Each and everyone one of us are so valuable that in order to save us, Jesus let us *murder him*.

Not just kill. Murder.

The Romans were the ones who physically crucified Jesus (Matthew 27:27-37) - which, if you remember, what was the word picture the sixth commandment, for murder? My dad just pointed this out to me last night, I never caught this before... It's a nail. How was Jesus murdered? He was nailed to a cross.

So the Romans physically killed him.

But the Israelites, Gods own people, were the ones who shouted “Crucify Him.” (Luke 23:21)

And its fascinating, if you read about the plot to Kill Jesus, and what it actually took... The religious leaders were so threatened by Him, and by the traction he had gained and by the power he had constantly displayed... that they wanted to kill him.

But to actually get it done, it took the Jewish people plotting with the religious leaders and the Sanhedrin, it took one of Jesus' followers, Judas, to betray Him and hand him over... it took them conspiring with Rome and with Herod all to make this happen. It took people coming together who had never worked together on anything, and never would again work together on *anything*, to bring down one man.

The only common ground that they ever had was Jesus. For them, it was how much they hated him. How much they wanted him gone. And after they killed him, they shared something else in common.

And we share it too.

We all killed God.

The religious leaders conspired against him.

Judas turned him over.

The Romans put the nails in his hands.

But it was our sin that put him there in the first place.

1 Peter 2:24 says that "He himself bore our sins, on his body, on the tree. That we might die to *our* sins. By his stripes, you are healed."

Hebrews 12:3 says "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."

And maybe you are here and as you look around this place you say "I don't have a single thing in common with anybody"

well you do. and his name is Jesus.

For the people plotting against Jesus, it was how much they hated him.

And for us, its how much He loves us.

You, just like me, had a part in the murdering of Jesus, and you, just like me, are saved because of his death... all at the same time.

It took unity in the midst of diversity to kill Him,
but all the powers of the world coming together could never stop Him.

Because the tomb is empty and Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2) doing what he does best.

Echad. Holding it all together.

Hear, Oh Israel.

Obey, Oh Israel.

The Lord our God, the Lord is *echad*.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ and love your neighbor as yourself.”