

THE FEAR OF GOD

FEAR OF GOD is not an emotion. Like faith, or repentance, the fear of God requires a practical response. To fear God is to honor Him by being OBEDIENT to His ways in our circumstances. This study shows us how we should respond to various circumstances in the fear of God. It also shows us God's response to our fear, or lack of fear of Him.

Definition The Old and New Testament meanings are similar:

In the Old Testament, the most common Hebrew word used for fear is "yare," which has the following shades of meaning: *'to fear' 'to be afraid' 'to revere' 'to honor' 'to respect' 'to stand in awe of'*

In the New Testament, the Greek word "phobeo" means *'to reverence' 'to venerate' 'to treat with deference or reverential obedience' 'to fear' 'to be afraid'*

In many cases the substitute meanings *'to honor,' 'to revere,'* or *'treat with deference or reverential obedience'* are more appropriate responses.

WAYS WE MUST FEAR OR HONOR GOD IN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

General Requirements Associated With Fearing God

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good"? (Deut 10:12-13).

"You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. (Deut 13:4).

To Fear God is to Keep His Commandments

"Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged." (Deut 6:1-2).

The very essence of fearing God is OBEDIENCE to His commandments, and will for us.

To Fear God Requires us to Love and Honor Each Other

"Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God." (Lev 25:17).

Loving God, and loving each other, are declared to be the most important of all God's commandments. If to fear God is to keep His commandments, it follows that we should be obedient in loving, honoring, and respecting each other.

We Must Honor God's Holiness

"Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God..... David was afraid of God that day, saying, "How can I bring the ark of God to me?" (1 Chr 13:10-12).

David had been careless by not honoring God's holiness. He had not thought it important to use the Levites to transport the ark, but instead chose Uzza, an unanointed servant. When God intervened, making it clear that man must honor His holiness, David feared.

This example shows us how we must honor God's name, or attributes, and revere His appointed ways. We must be careful in how we represent God - or present *"the testimony of Jesus Christ."* Moses also was careless in representing God, and as a consequence he failed to enter the land of promise.

We Must Honor God's Anointed Leaders

Christ promised to give anointed leaders to the church: *"some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."* (Eph 4:11) For the most part the church has chosen to depart from the pattern provided by Christ, by employing ministers with worldly qualifications. This is in fact dishonoring Christ.

In the Old Testament God made it abundantly clear that to honor His anointed servants was to honor God Himself. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all their company disputed Moses' leadership, God intervened, and *"the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods."* (Num 16:32).

To Fear God is to Revere His Word and His Wisdom

"Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes" (Deut 17:18-19).

"My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God." (Prov 2:1-5).

Fearing God requires us to revere His word as one of His appointed ways of instructing us. We should open our hearts to the anointing of the Holy Spirit as He makes the written word a living personal word to us. We should *"tremble at His word"* in accepting and responding to what the Holy Spirit has revealed to us.

We Must Fear God Rather Than Man

In the Old Testament we are given a graphic account of how Saul allowed his fear of man to negate his obedience to God. As a consequence he lost his kingship.

"Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he also has rejected you from being king. Then Saul said to Samuel, "I

have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.” (1 Sam 15:22-24).

In the New testament, Christ reinforced the command to fear God rather than man. To fear God is to be faithful in presenting the undiluted uncompromising word of the Lord without considering the reactions of man.

"And do not fear those (man) who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him (God) who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matt 10:28).

Jesus then discloses the dire consequences: ***"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."*** (Matt 10:32-33).

Those in Authority Must Rule in the Fear of God

"The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.'" (2 Sam 23:3).

It is particularly important that those in authority do not compromise their headship by making their judgments pleasing to man rather than to God. They must rule as those who must give account. ***"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account."*** (Hebrews 13:17).

Associated With Our Freewill Offerings

"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. (Deut 14:22-23).

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts....."You offer defiled food on My altar. But say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible..... You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," says the LORD of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" Says the LORD." (Mal 1:6).

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it." (Mal 3:8-10).

We should understand that our freewill offerings are not a donation to the church to uphold its management. It is an offering to God as an indication of our thankfulness for our many blessings. To present an offering begrudgingly, or to present an unworthy offering, is to dishonor God as ***'Jehovah Jireh,' - "He who Provides."*** On the other hand, to present a worthy offering with a thankful heart is to open the doorway to God's bountiful provision.

Warning - Well Being Can Promote Indifferent and Independence

"So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers...to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant-- when you have eaten and are full--... then beware, lest you forget the LORD... You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him... You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you." (Deut 6:10-14).

This is a pertinent warning. Wealth and prosperity tend to promote a proud independence and self-satisfaction, which make people *"say in (their) heart(s), 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth'"* (Deut 8:17), forgetting that it is God who is the source of all their provision and blessing.

We Should Revere God's Infinite Power

"for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever." (Josh 4:23-24).

To fear God is to revere His omnipotence. He is ALMIGHTY GOD - the God of awesome deeds and judgments.

We Should Fear God Because Our Works Will Be Judged

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Eccl 12:13-14).

Nothing of the flesh will bypass God's scrutiny and judgment. Therefore all our works should be done diligently in the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that God's ways and judgments never change. *"I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him." (Eccl 3:14).*

To Fear God is to Respond to His Judgments

"I said, 'Surely you will fear Me, you will receive instruction'-- so that her dwelling would not be cut off, Despite everything for which I punished her. But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds. (Zeph 3:7).

"Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Return to Me," says the LORD of hosts, "and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds.'" But they did not hear nor heed Me," says the LORD." (Zech 1:3-4).

"You are wearied in the length of your way; yet you did not say, 'There is no hope.' You have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved. And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, that you have lied and not remembered Me, nor taken it to your heart? Is it not because I have held My peace from of old that you do not fear Me?" (Isa 57:10-11).

We lack the fear of God when we take His warnings and judgments lightly by persisting in the old fleshly path. Where God would have us come to an end in ourselves and turn to Him, we find new strength in pursuing the demands of the flesh.

Fearing God is to Pursue Holiness On the Path of the Cross

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor 7:1).

Every Christian should embark on a pilgrimage of personal holiness. To be static on this path is in fact to be in a state of decline. To fear God is to be totally committed to the pursuit of holiness, accepting the discipline and refinement associated with the path of the cross.

Latter Day Judgment - Man Will Learn to Fear God

“Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days” (Hosea 3:5).

The current corrupted state of the church is largely due to the fact that she has lost the fear of God. This has resulted in the current climate of apostasy and lawlessness. The latter-day church will be confronted with a purging and refining judgment which will restore to her the fear of God. This attitude of reverence and obedience is a necessary requirement to enable the Holy Spirit to restore the church, and bring about the last great harvest.

GOD’S RESPONSES TO OUR FEAR OF HIM

God’s Care of Us is Related to Honoring Him

“And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day.” (Deut 6:24).

God Will Preserve Our Spiritual Walk

“If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God.” (1 Sam 12:14-15).

It is God who sets us on our spiritual pilgrimage. It is He who orders our path for our own good. If we honor Him by accepting His ways, and His hand on us, then He will preserve our spiritual walk.

REVERENCE AND GODLY FEAR - NOT LAWLESSNESS

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, BY WHICH WE MAY SERVE GOD ACCEPTABLY WITH REVERENCE AND GODLY FEAR.” (Heb 12:28).