

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

To properly understand why God's children throughout Scripture are admonished to fear Him, Christians need to fully comprehend who God is – His nature, His names, His attributes – the magnitude of His Majesty, His awesome power. Scriptures do not seek to prove the existence of God. They simply state the fact, and describe those who deny His existence as fools (CP Psa 14:1 and 15:1 with 19:1-14). God has always existed, and man can only come to a true knowledge of himself as he acknowledges God as the beginning and end of all existence – the first and final cause of all that is. God is before all things; both man and things were created by God's decision and through His action, and Christians need to know the Scriptures that teach this (CP Gen 1:1-2: 4; Ex 20:11; 31:17; 1Chr 29:11-12; Neh 9:6; Job 10:8-12; 26:7-14; 38:1-41: 34; Psa 8:3-9; 19:1-9; 24:1-2; 33:6-9; 89:5-12; 90:2; 95:3-6; 100:3; 102:24-27; 104:1-31; 118:24; 119:90-91; 145:10-13; 148:1-13; 149:2; Pr 8:22-29; 30:4; Ecc 11:5; Isa 40:12, 22, 26, 28; 42:5; 44:24; 45: 5-7, 12, 18; 57:15; Jer 10:12-13, 16; 51:15-16; Amos 4:13; 5:8; 9:5-6; Zech 12:1; Mal 2:10; Jn 1:1-3, 10; Ac 14:15; 17:24; Ro 1:20, 25; 4:17; 11:36; 2Cor 4:6; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; 1Ti 1:17; He 1:1-3, 10; 11:3; Rev 1:8, 17; 4:11; 10:6; 14:7; 22:12-13).

Everyone of those Scriptures need to be carefully studied and meditated upon to lay a foundation for the following teaching. (See also author's comments on Jn 1:1(a) and 1:1(b), Ac 14:8-18, Ro 1:19-21, 11:33-36, Col 1:16-17, He 1:1-4(b), 1:5, Rev 1:8 in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, and his studies, *Jesus—eternally God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *God - His nature, His names, His attributes; Jesus, and God's Perfect Self-revelation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**, and *The Six Days of Creation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 3)**).

The study of God as He is revealed in Scripture is extremely important, because it is imperative to acknowledge His Sovereignty over all His creation in order to fear Him – to hold Him in Reverential awe. The eternal existence of God, and His Sovereignty, must be a settled matter, because their concept of God determines Christians' views of the world, sin, life, duty and conduct. Misconceived ideas or unscriptural notions of God as to His Divine character and nature, inevitably lead to distorted concepts of every other Biblical truth. The Doctrine of God exercises a definite spiritual influence upon Christian character. One cannot grasp all that the Doctrine entails and at the same time live contrary to the character and mind of God (CP Col 3:1-17). Believing the Scriptural record of God results, or should, in being in fear or Reverential awe of Him for who He is, for what He has done, and for what He is going to do. God has revealed Himself in His dealings with man. Man is to himself a revelation of the being of God, so an innate recognition of the existence of and their responsibility to God, dwells in all men.

If man does not know God, his ignorance is culpable, seeing that ample evidence of God's existence is available, both in Scripture and the material universe (CP Psa 19:1-14; Ro 1:19-20). Scriptures alone are the complete and final revelation of God, His word,

His works, His ways. Scriptures alone reveal His glorious attributes, activities, and appearances. Scriptures alone record His creation, and unfolds His dealings with man – of his creation in innocence and purity; of his fall; of his redemption through the propitiatory death of God's own son, the Lord Jesus Christ; of his future resurrection, and of his place in God's Eternal Kingdom, etc (CP 2Ti 3:16-17). Scriptures do not present God as an abstraction, nor as some remote and impassive Deity, but a personal, living God who loves and cares for His creation (CP Jn 3:16-17). The complete revelation of God is through the manifested person, work, and word of Jesus Christ (CP Jn 14:8-9; 1Ti 3:16).

Throughout the Bible Scriptures speak in the name and authority of God, and presents man with a fourfold revelation of Him: in *Nature* – a God above man. The so-called "laws of nature" are nothing more than man's description of how he perceives God at work in the world, but they neither have inherent power nor work by themselves. God acts in accordance with the laws and principles He has Himself established (CP Job 38:4-41; Ro 11:33); in *Providence* – a God beyond man. *Providence* is the continuous activity of God in His creation by which He preserves and governs. The doctrine of Providence affirms God's absolute Sovereignty over His creation, and confirms the dependence of all creation on the Creator, which clearly and unequivocally refutes the theory of evolution, which is taught by some in the Church, or that the universe is governed by chance or fate. God is in absolute control (CP Psa 47:2, 6-9; 103:19, 22); in *Law* – a God against man's sin. God cannot even look on sin. He had to turn His face away from Jesus on the Cross as the Sin bearer for all mankind. God had made Him who knew no sin to be sin, that repentant sinners might become the righteousness of God in Him (CP Isa 53:5-6; Mt 26:36-44; 27:45-46; 2Cor 5:21). The fourth and final revelation of God to man in Scripture is in *Grace* – a God for man, and in him. *Grace* is synonymous with God's Redemptive Plan for fallen man manifest in the gift of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the blessings of salvation purchased with His blood. Hell-deserving sinners are saved by Grace through faith in Christ's atoning death (CP Ro 5:1-2; Eph 1:3-7; 2:1-9). See also author's comments on Mt 26:33-44, 27:45-46, Jn 14:7, Ro 5:1, 11:33-36, 2Cor 5:21(A) and (B), Col 3:16-17, 1Ti 3:16, 2Ti 3:16-17, Eph 1:3-6 and his study, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 3)**.

Now to examine what Scriptures teach about the fear of the Lord. There are many and varied categories and degrees of fear recorded in Scripture, including dread, timidity, cowardice, reticence, fright, alarm, terror, apprehension, fear of man, normal fear of danger, being afraid, etc. Fear in the context of this study – *The Fear of the Lord* – refers not to the dread that comes out of fear of punishment by God, but awe-inspiring fear – Reverential awe – of God, for who He is, for what He has done, and for what He is going to do. To be in fear of God is to acknowledge His infinite greatness and His Sovereignty over His creation (CP Psa 104:1-35; 111:9-10; 145:3-7), and that there is a coming Day of Judgement to be met for everyone who ever lived (CP Ecc 12:13-14; Mt 12:35-

36). Judgement Day for Christians will be the Judgement Seat of Christ (CP Ro 14:9-11; 1Cor 3:11-15; 2Cor 5:10). Judgement Day for non-Christians will be the Great White Throne Judgement (CP Rev 20:11-15). The word *Reverend* in Psa 111:9 means literally “to be feared, inspiring awe and deserving to be held in honour”. In Ecc 12:13-14 Solomon declares that the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His Commandments. He admonishes God’s children to bring life to its ultimate conclusion by fearing God and walking in strict obedience to His Word (CP De 6:1-2; Pr 3:7-8; 8:13-14; 10:27; 14:26-27; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17-18).

The Reverential fear of God as a controlling motive of the Christian life in matters Spiritual and moral, is not a mere fear of God’s power and righteous retribution, but a wholesome dread of displeasing Him (CP Php 2:12). *Fear and trembling* here refers to the attitude with which Christians are to pursue their Sanctification. It involves a healthy fear of offending God and the dread of sinning against Him, and of the consequences that may follow (CP Mt 3:10; 7:19-27; Jn 15:1-8; 1Cor 10:1-13; 2Cor 13:5; Eph 6:6-8; He 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 2Pe 1:10-11). The fear of the Lord influences the disposition and attitude of all whose circumstances are guided by trust in God through the indwelling Holy Spirit (CP Ac 9:31; 2Cor 7:1; Eph 5:18-21). The fear of God will inspire a carefulness in dealing with others in His fear (CP Ro 13:7-14; 1Pe 2:17-21).

The fear of the Lord promotes righteousness and long life. It also delivers from death. As long as God’s children fear Him, put their hope in Him, and remain in His will, God will watch over them and protect them. He will save their souls from hell and they will not die before the appointed time (CP Psa 33:18-19 with 91:1-16). God also sends His Angels to minister to the needs of His children (CP Psa 34:7; 91:11-12; Mt 18:10; Ac 12:6-10; He 1:14). God has ultimate authority over all things: all men are subject to God’s authority (CP Dan 4:24-33; Jas 4:12-15); all nature is subject to God’s will and His word (CP Job 36:22-37; 24; 42:1-2). God is all powerful – *Omnipotent* (CP Psa 147:5; Rev 11:15-18). God is everywhere – *Omnipresent* (CP Psa 139:1-12). God is not only the source of life and breath for Christians, but is their environment as well (CP Ac 17:24-28). God is also all knowing – *Omniscient* (CP Ro 11:33). God’s knowledge is absolute; He sees and knows everything – past, present and future. God is infinite in knowledge. God is also *Immutable* – the unchanging God who cannot go back on His word (CP Nu 23:19; Psa 102:27; 119:89; Mal 3:6; Ro 11:29; 2Ti 2:13; He 6:17-18; Jas 1:17; 1Jn 1:5).

Scriptures declare the fear of the Lord to be the beginning of knowledge, the fountainhead of wisdom and thus the pathway to true life (CP Job 28:28; Psa 111:10; Pr 1:7, 29; 2:5-7; 8:13-14; 9:10; 15:16, 33). The fear of the Lord is a feature of the people God delights in (CP Psa 147:11). Finally, there is no want for those who fear God (CP Psa 34:7-11).

In keeping with the meaning of *The Fear of the Lord* and in accordance with the Biblical record of creation, Christians should fear God first and foremost because of the magnitude of His Majesty and power – His absolute Sovereignty over all His creation. The fact that God created everything that exists including human beings, Heaven and earth, day and night, the sun, moon and stars, the seasons – summer, autumn, winter, spring – rain and snow, cold and heat, the tides to ebb and flow – to come in and go out – the grass, flowers, trees, the birds and the bees and everything that has wings and flies, the seas and oceans and all sea creatures – fish etc – rivers and springs, animals and reptiles, the sky and the clouds, seed-time and harvest and everything else. God spoke everything that is into being over six thousand years ago and they still continue to this day, and will continue, upheld and sustained by God’s Word throughout eternity, is sufficient cause for Christians who profess to love Him and are saved by His Grace, to fear God, to be in Reverential awe of Him. God’s Holiness and enabling power with which He has endued Christians to overcome sin and live Holy lives in Christ, is also sufficient cause for Christians to Fear Him.

The New Testament directly links Christians walking in the fear of the Lord with the growth of the Church and being comforted by the Holy Spirit (CP Ac 9:31). This essentially teaches that only those who fear God and obey Him from the heart experience Spiritual security in their lives, and the enabling grace and power of the Holy Spirit. They can be sure that God will deliver their soul from death, as we learned earlier in Psa 33:18-19 (CP again Psa 33:18-19 and 91:1-16). See also author’s comments on Mt 7:21, 12:36-37, Jn 15:2, 15:4-6, Ac 9:31, 17:30, Ro 11:29, 11:33-36, 13:11-14, 14:10-12, 1Cor 3:12-15, 10:1-5, 10:9, 2Cor 13:5, Eph 5:18-20, 6:5-9, Php 2:12-13, 2Ti 2:11-13, He 1:14, 6:4-6, 10:26-31, Jas 4:13-16, 2Pe 1:10, Rev 11:14-19, 20:11-15 in his book, **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, and his studies *Psalm 91* and *Coming Judgements of God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Ecclesiastes – A Study on the Futility of Life apart from God* and *Insight For Living – A Study on Proverbs* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.