***The Fear of the Lord

RV79-01***

We're studying the vision that John had in heaven of God's throne room. This is segment number 16 of that series. It is recorded for us in Revelation 4:1-5.

One of the things that is always good to remember about what happens when people enter eternity is that they retain the memory center of their minds. When you go to heaven, you do not leave your memory behind you. The experience of your life on earth is not wiped out when you enter heaven. You do look back, and you do remember. There are examples in the Bible of people who have left the earthly scene and gone into eternity, and whose memory center is fully intact. They look back, and they do remember their experience on earth.

For this reason, the unbeliever in hell will recall his evil and his negative volition toward the Bible; toward God; and, toward the gospel. The believer in heaven will remember his attitude toward the Bible, and the use of it in his life. The reality of the gospel, certainly, at that point, will be very clear to everyone. Those who mistakenly thought that they could get to heaven on the basis of part of the work of the Christ and part of their own human efforts are going to realize the terrible mistake that they have made, as they find themselves in the lake of fire. Those who accepted the grace of God and a salvation apart from human doing will realize how right they were, as they enjoy the bliss of being in the presence of the living Creator God.

The central place of Bible doctrine in human experience will also be clearly evident to everyone. There'll be no more debate as to what role the Bible plays in a person's life. The role that it had played will then be very clear. There will be an enormous shock, of course, throughout the human race, as people realize what false religious voices they followed, when they ignored the Bible, and the eternal losses, consequently, to themselves. The role of the Bible (the role of doctrine) will be very clear to everybody.

**Knowledge**

So, one of the primary ministries of God the Holy Spirit, to the individual church-age believer today is producing knowledge of Bible doctrine truth. As we look at the seven torches that John saw before God's throne, in the throne room of heaven, these torches representing ministries of God the Holy Spirit to the individual believer, one of those flaming torches is the torch of knowledge. It is, in part, the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer, to provide the knowledge of doctrine to the believer. God the Holy Spirit possesses all spiritual knowledge, and He teaches this real truth (this true truth) to positive believers. The Bible itself is the divinely provided vehicle for conveying God's truth. When you talk about spiritual knowledge, you must equate that immediately with the Bible. There is no spiritual knowledge outside of the Bible. There are many religious ecclesiastical organizations (a hierarchy of religious powers) which claim to be a source of divine provision. That is absolutely not true. The only source of knowledge of spiritual things is the Bible itself.

For this reason, the Holy Spirit illuminates the content of Scripture to the mind of the student of the Bible. That is what this flaming torch of knowledge is doing. It's providing knowledge from the Bible into the mind of the believer. We're not going to go through reviewing the grace system that God has provided for perceiving spiritual things. You're well-acquainted with that. But here is where that system comes into operation. From the Scriptures, through the local church ministry and the pastor-teacher gift, the knowledge of truth recorded is transferred by the Spirit of God into the understanding of the individual believer, who then stores it in his human spirit, where it is then cycled up to affect the facets of the soul in the believer's daily life. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the only source of divine viewpoint knowledge. The Holy Spirit illuminates the content of Scripture to the mind of those who study the Word of God.

This knowledge of Bible doctrine truth transforms the mind of the positive believer from human viewpoint to divine viewpoint orientation. Everybody enters the Christian life completely saturated with human viewpoint. Divine viewpoint, at the point of salvation, is zero. The only divine viewpoint at the moment of salvation is the realization of justification by faith through Christ. That's the extent of divine viewpoint. Gradually, the mind has to be transformed from its human viewpoint delusion disorientation into an orientation to divine viewpoint. That is what the knowledge of God provides.

Yes, the consequence of probably what you're thinking is exactly right. Therefore, if a person becomes a Christian, and he has but a minimal amount of instruction in the knowledge of the Word of God, and he receives very little instruction in Bible doctrine truth, then he never gets away from human viewpoint living. He is always absorbed with human viewpoint living because he doesn't have a divine viewpoint mentality. That's exactly right. That is the case with most Christians today.

So, this is a very important torch representing a very important ministry that God the Holy Spirit performs in providing the believer with knowledge of God's viewpoint. Most Christians never grasp this role of the Bible in their lives, so they are in for a sad shock when they get to heaven. They will see the losses that they have experienced, both temporal and eternal. Religious zeal, which is not governed by the knowledge of Bible doctrine, leads a person to self-righteousness and to human good works. He equates that with the work of God. It is the knowledge of Bible doctrine which guides a person into godly practices, and warns him of self-destructive ways. The believer whose mind is saturated with Bible doctrine truth is wealthy, even though he may possess little material treasures, because the material treasures are going to be left behind. But one thing that you do take into eternity with you is the extent of your knowledge of doctrinal truth. That goes with you, and for all eternity, that affects the quality of your eternal life.

**Love**

The quality of divine love (love which is central to all human relationships) is possible only in the person with the divine viewpoint knowledge of the Bible. Nobody possesses genuine love unless he is a person who understands Bible doctrine truth. This is one of the greatest things that a human being can learn. Our society plays a great delusion upon the minds of people in a number of ways, conveying the idea that love is possible apart from a knowledge of the Word of God. The Bible makes it very clear that no genuine emotion of love is possible apart from the Word of God.

So, you have human beings who are entering the marriage relationship, who have a smattering, at best, of a knowledge of the Word of God. They are actually picking partners that they're going to spend their lives with, and they think that they're doing that on the basis of something that they call "the attachment of love." Without the knowledge of the Word of God, this terrific ministry that the Spirit of God provides, you cannot experience love. You cannot love someone else, and those who do not have it cannot love you. And if you haven't learned that yet, then you are a very self-deluded individual. The quality of divine love, central to all human relationships, is possible only to those who have the knowledge of the Word of God.

For this reason, the first thing that God the Father seeks from His children is that they become intimately acquainted with Him through the knowledge of doctrine. The first thing that God requires of a believer is not that you serve Him. The first thing that God requires of a believer is not that you give Him your treasures, and that you finance His work. The first thing that God requires of a believer is that you get to know Him intimately through knowledge of doctrine. Divine viewpoint knowledge is going to dominate the thinking of all of humanity during the millennium, and that's why it's going to be such a totally different world. Today, the knowledge of the Word of God dominates very little of the human mind. But in the millennium, the world will be covered with the knowledge of doctrinal principles, and everybody will function on those principles. The ruler, Jesus Christ, will insist on punishing anyone who deviates from operating on the divine viewpoint concepts of doctrine.

So, the flaming torch of knowledge, which is seen by John in Revelation 4:5, symbolizes the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit in teaching the believers God's true spiritual knowledge. Remember that the Hebrew word for "knowledge" is "daath." That is the word for "knowledge" that we have in Isaiah 11:2. It is a word that refers to information which one receives primarily through the senses, but to some degree also through meditation and intellectual analyzing. But it is very real information, and that's what the word is referring to.

**Knowledge Enriches our Lives**

We have a few more points that we can add to give us an understanding of what this torch provides for us. We should recognize that divine viewpoint knowledge enriches the life of the believer. That's why we say that a person who has divine viewpoint knowledge, and may be poor in material things, is still a very wealthy person. Your real wealth consists of the extent of divine viewpoint knowledge that you possess. This is illustrated for us in Proverbs 24:1-4 verses, where we read, "Do not be envious of evil men, neither desire to be with them, for their heart studies destruction, and their lips talk of mischief. Through wisdom is a house built. By understanding it is established, and by knowledge the chambers shall be filled with all precious and pleasant riches."

The person who wants to have a rich life; a meaningful life; and, a significant life is the person who has the knowledge of doctrine. With that, whatever else you have becomes ennobled. Whatever else you possess in life becomes significant only to the degree that this knowledge is there. Without it, you are a poor person. You have nothing really of value. The wisdom of divine viewpoint values builds one's life on a godly foundation. Understanding, or discernment, provides stability in one's life. Knowledge, or divine viewpoint information, produces the enrichment of happiness.

Notice how these three: wisdom; understanding; and, knowledge follow in this passage. It tells us that wisdom is a house which is built. Wisdom, or divine viewpoint values (that's what wisdom means), builds your life (builds the house in which you live) on a godly foundation. But it is understanding that gives you stability in your life. That's another ministry of the Holy Spirit. We've already studied the torch of wisdom. We have studied the torch of understanding, which means discernment. It is discernment that gives you stability in your life. When you don't have discernment, you're always fluctuating up and down. You're always flying off in one direction and another. There is no stability. But it is knowledge that takes that life of yours (that house that has been built upon a stable foundation) and enriches your life. If you want to have an enriched and happy life, it takes the knowledge of doctrine to get it.

**We are not Helpless Victims**

The ministry of the Spirit of God, in providing us with divine viewpoint knowledge, indicates to us that the Christian is not a helpless victim of some inexorable fate – that, as we saw last time, was the concept of the Greek tragedy. That viewpoint says that man, no matter how hard he tries, and no matter how much he wants to do what is right, the deck is stacked against him, and he's a victim of an inexorable fate. That is not true, and knowledge of the Word of God demonstrates that. The indwelling Holy Spirit is a torch of spiritual knowledge to the believer. No information is more essential to securing happiness than God's spiritual information. The believer who has this information enjoys lasting happiness, because he knows how to choose, and his choices result in successful living. So, he's not just a victim of some fate. He is the one who enjoys the consequences of right choices made on the basis of right information. The knowledge of God is real truth which the spiritual Christian can receive without any limits. So, God's mind and the believer's mind possess the same content in common, and that guides our destinies to make us free.

**The Religions of the World**

In John 8:32, we have that famous statement: "You shall know the truth (the knowledge of doctrine), and the truth shall make you free." All of this is because we have a Bible. All of this is because we have the knowledge of God recorded in Scripture. Please remember that the religions of the world do not have Bibles. Sometimes we talk about the "Bible of Hinduism" or the "Bible of Confucianism," but those are terms that we are using. They are not the terms that those religions themselves use, because the word "Bible" technically means a revelation from deity. The religions of the world never claim to have a revelation from deity. They do not claim to have a revelation from deity, let alone that they should claim that they have writings that are inspired – that they are without error.

So, the religions of the world simply do not make any claim about having a revelation of knowledge. Most of the religions of the world are non-theistic. They do not believe in a supreme, absolute, perfect, personal Creator God who communicates with man. A lot of people make the mistake of thinking that the religions of the world all have an approach to God. The religions of the world are non-theistic. They do not think in terms of a personal, living God.

For example, what does the Japanese think of Shintoism? To the extent that they have gods, their gods are their ancestors. The people that they are addressing are their ancestors. They are not addressing a personal living deity. Shintoism, like all the religions of the world, is non-theistic. It does not believe in a personal God. It is very important to realize that – that Christianity, along with Judaism, claims to have a personal living God as its sponsor. It claims, therefore, to have a communication from this God in the form of a written Scripture, which we call the Bible.

Usually, these religions of the world are simply recognizing some powerful spirits. At best, they recognize some superhuman powers, like the Greek and Roman mythological characters, which were half-human and half-spirit deities of some kind. They worship the forces of nature, such as the Indians on the American continent. The object of their worship was spirit powers, whether in animals, or in some mighty warrior. The spirit of an inanimate objects also becomes a thing that they worship. But it is not the worship of a personal God.

So, ultimately, the world's religions do not expect a God who will communicate with them. And they don't look forward to coming into the presence of such a God. When a person in Hinduism dies, where is he going? When a person is Shintoism dies, where is he going? When a person in any of the religions of the world leaves this life, the thing he is looking for is nothingness. Sometimes the word to describe that is the word "nirvana," which means "an emptiness." The thing he looks forward to is going out and disappearing and dissipating into nothingness, so that he is out of existence. He does not look to a personal God. So, there is no God, consequently, to these religions who can reveal themselves with knowledge in a written book. Only the Christian can say, "Thus saith the Lord," and thereby really speak the mind of God, because he has knowledge from God.

Satan has recognized this defect in his systems of religion. Early on, Satan realized that Christianity (and Judaism, before Christianity) were cutting the legs off of all of Satan's systems, because those systems did not have Bibles. Only Judaism with the Old Testament, and Christianity with the New Testament, had a Bible that it could authoritatively point to as knowledge from a personal, living God. So, Satan has from, time to time, tried to correct this defect. His first attempt was with Muhammad, who, while he was in a state of catatonic fits, and was babbling certain revelations; certain sayings; and, certain illuminations which were then recorded, produced the Koran. So, the Koran claims to be Scripture. Islam claims to have a Bible – a book of knowledge as a revelation from God. But it is a fraud.

Later on, Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormons, came along, and Satan used him to try to pull off the same thing – to produce a book which is Scripture. Perhaps you have visited the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City, and listened to the lectures, and actually have seen a Mormon Bible, which is a combination of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon tacked on at the end, all in one book. Once you pick up a book like that, you will understand what the Mormons are claiming – that they have a revelation from a personal God, and that they have another Bible added to what Judaism and Christianity had. But the Book of Mormon is a fraud. All of these books, that try to speak as revelations of divine information, deal with a lot of speculative, abstract ideas.

Only the Bible is set in human history. Only the Bible can be read and then you can go back in history, and see whether what the Bible says actually fit into human history, and whether these things actually did take place. Of course, the Bible has been consistently correct from creation on, through all of God's redemptive activity to save man from hell, and to bring him into heaven.

The religions of the world have no confirmation in predictive prophecy, for example. That sometimes comes as a shock to people. The religions of the world never make a prediction about the future. Only Christianity (and the Old Testament of Judaism) had predictive confirmation. This is one way that God indicated that the books of the Old and New Testament were supernatural books. They were produced by God, and His evidence was predictions that were hundreds of years in the future that no one could fulfill but God Himself. That predictive quality in the Bible, in itself, stamps the fact that it is true knowledge from God. It is true truth. The religions of the world consistently avoid that, and they are very wise to do that.

This is one of the problems that the Book of Mormon has. Joseph Smith made the sad mistake of trying to play the prophet, and trying to prove that he was a prophet by being able to predict future events. Since then, the Book of Mormon has had to be corrected literally thousands of times. And don't let any Mormon tell you otherwise. Most Mormons don't realize that themselves. The Book of Mormon has been corrected thousands of times in order to try to fix it up, as later events contradicted what the writer was saying, or to fix mistakes that were found – inconsistencies.

One of the worst mistakes that Joseph Smith made on one occasion, to demonstrate that he was a true prophet of God, was that he declared to his followers that the Mormon temple would be built at the New Jerusalem, which was at Independence, Missouri, in his lifetime. Independence, Missouri, was the hometown of Harry Truman. Who could believe that that could be the New Jerusalem? Only a Joseph Smith. That was a serious mistake for him to say that he was demonstrating that he was the voice of God by making this prophecy. It would be built in his lifetime. And, of course, it never was. So, when the religions of the world try their hand at prophecy, they only prove how false they are.

Human reason is divinely fashioned to apprehend the knowledge of God which is recorded in the Bible, and to be received from the indwelling Holy Spirit. Now, that's a terrific combination – human reason, capable of grasping divine truth, and God the Holy Spirit there to teach it to us. That's what John 16:13 says. Jesus said, "Nevertheless, when He, the Spirit of Truth (that is, God the Holy Spirit) is come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak from Himself, but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come."

The person and the work of Jesus Christ can mean nothing to either the unbeliever or to the believer who lacks the knowledge about Jesus Christ provided by God the Holy Spirit from the Bible. So, if the Lord is going to mean anything to you as an unbeliever, it must come from information and knowledge of Scripture. If the Lord is going to mean anything to you as a believer, it will be to the degree that you have an understanding of Him and a knowledge of Him from the Word of God.

**The Fear of the Lord**

That brings us to the final torch. In the list of these torches in Isaiah 11:2, which are describing the ministry of the Spirit of God, first to the humanity of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and subsequently the same ministry to those of us who are believers of the church age whom the Holy Spirit indwells, Isaiah 11:2 says, "And the Spirit of the LORD (that is, the Spirit of "YHWH," the most sacred name of God) shall rest upon Him: the spirit of wisdom, understanding, council, might, knowledge, (and now we come to the seventh one), and the fear of the Lord. Perhaps, in some respects, this is the greatest one of all.

What does it mean to fear the Lord? The Hebrew word looks like this: "yiraw." The word "yiraw" is the word for fear in Isaiah 11:2. The word "yiraw" comes from a root meaning which means "a feeling of dread." The word means what it sounds like. The Hebrew word means "a feeling of dread."

For example, it is used in Deuteronomy 2:25 in that respect: "This day I will begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of you, and shall humble and be in anguish because of you." Moses reports from God that God is telling the Jewish people, the people of Israel, as they have entered the Promised Land, surrounded by the Canaanite nations (the pagan nations), "I am going to put in these people the 'yiraw' of you on all of them." They are going to be possessed by a sense of "yiraw" – a sense of dread; a sense of terror; and, a sense of uneasiness. The root meaning is this feeling of dread.

One of the first examples of it that we have in the Bible is right up there at the beginning of human history in Genesis 3:10, for it was the word that Adam used in explaining his feelings toward God after he had sinned: "And he said (Adam said to the Lord), 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was 'yiraw' (I was afraid) because I was naked, and I hid myself.'" Adam said, "After I sinned, I heard Your voice, just like I had heard it previously when you came to visit and to teach us. But this time there was on me a deep sense of dread and terror when I heard Your voice."

In Genesis 32:11, you have this word used again to illustrate the sense of dread where Jacob is returning after many years, and is about to face his brother Esau again. The last time they met, Jacob had pulled that double-cross (that sneaky, deceptive act) that robbed his brother of his birthright, so that his brother would not be the line through which the Messiah would come. His brother would not be the line through which the world would enjoy the promise of the Abrahamic covenant. Now Jacob is about to face his brother, Esau. He's moving back home. The word comes in that Esau is on his way with an army of men. In Genesis 32:11, Jacob, in desperation, turns to God and says, "Deliver me I pray from the hand of my brother (from the hand of Esau), for I fear him." Here you have the root concept again of this word "yiraw:" "I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Jacob was in dread (in terror) that Esau was going to come, and he was going to kill all of them. So, he turned to the Lord in prayer.

Psalm 119:120: "My flesh trembles for fear of You. I am afraid of Your judgments." That verse very specifically indicates the way this word is used when it speaks about the fear of the Lord: "My flesh trembles for fear of You." It is the dread of God. It is the terror of God: "I am afraid of Your judgments" – God's judgments which come upon us when we are out of step with His Holiness, and when we seek to undermine His integrity.

Isaiah tells us that the particular fear that this torch represents is the fear of the LORD. And, you notice in your King James translation, that the word LORD is all in capital letters, so that you're back to that sacred Tetragrammaton "YHWH," these four Hebrew letters that represent the name, as it is usually said, "Jehovah." But this is the most sacred name that God has – a name by which He has identified Himself. That is the sacred name that the Jews would not even pronounce when they read Scripture. They would not even pronounce those four sacred letters. So, it is specifically "fear of the Creator God" that we're dealing with here.

**Awe**

This is a dread of God's holiness and of His power. What this does is produce a reverential awe. So, from dread and terror, we do come to the concept of fear of the Lord as being a reverential awe of Him. This is illustrated in Job 37:22-24. Job says, "Fair weather comes out of the north. With God is awe-inspiring majesty. Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out. He is excellent in power and in justice. And in plenteous righteousness, He will not afflict. Men do, therefore, fear Him. He does not respect any that are wise of heart." It says, "Men do, therefore, fear Him." Why? Because they look upon the power of God; the awe-inspiring majesty of God; and, the absolute omnipotence of God, and the result is a fear in the sense of a reverential awe.

Another passage is Psalm 33:8: "Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him." We are fearing Him because of His Holiness, and the power that He has to execute His judgments. Therefore, you stand in respect for awe of God.

**Respect**

I suppose that the word that we would use, best of all, would be "respect." The fear of the Lord is a respect for God's uncompromising holiness as the basis of all of His dealings with mankind. This is illustrated so effectively in Jonah 1:10. The fear of the Lord is a respect for God's uncompromising holiness as the basis of all of his dealings with men. This gives us the record of the ship on which Jonah is trying to escape the will of God, and they are trapped in this terrific storm. Everybody on board is in fear of his life: "Then the men were exceedingly afraid." There you have this concept of dread and terror in this same root word again: "And said unto him, 'Why have you done this?' For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told him. Then they said unto him, 'What shall we do for you, that the sea may be calm unto us?' For the sea aged, and it was tempestuous. And he (that is, Jonah) said unto them, 'Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea, so the sea shall be calm for you. For I know that for my sake, this great tempest is upon you.'" These men, in desperation, say, "What can we do? Why have you done this? And what shall we do?" Jonah says, "You're right. You're in this position because of my rebellion against God. Take me and throw me overboard." Well, the sailors couldn't quite get themselves to do that.

Verse 13 says, "Nevertheless, the men rode hard to bring her to the land, but they could not, for the sea raged and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried until the Lord and said, 'We beseech You, O Lord. We beseech You. Let us not perish for this man's life, and don't lay upon us innocent blood, for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.' So, they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging."

This is a terrific illustration of the fact of the power of God, and the fear of these men in the presence of that power – their awe of Him. So, verse 3:16 says, "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord and made vows." When they saw that sea suddenly become calm, and that ship stabilized, they were even more fearful than they were before. What is the Bible saying? It says that they had a greater and a deeper sense of awe and a reverence for God than they had before. So, the concept of fearing God does indeed have the idea of a dread of God (a terror of God), but it also blends with the concept of a reverential awe of God in terms of a respect for who He is, and His power, and His holiness.

God has power to enforce the judgments of His Holiness. That's why we are to be in awe of Him. In Exodus 14:31, this concept is stated – that God has the power to enforce the righteous judgments of His Holiness: "Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses." God has the power that merits respect.

The greatness of God and His sovereign power is the thing then that creates this respectful fear in man. Man is, by nature, in awe of anything that dwarfs his power. Anybody who stands on the edge of the Grand Canyon has that sense of smallness, and he is awed by the immensity of what he sees out there. He realizes his own finiteness, particularly if you are a well-educated person, and you realize that that Grand Canyon was caused, in all likelihood, by the waters rushing off the earth as the flood dried up, and that that was carved out basically by the rushing of those waters. You stand there, and you see something like that in your mind's eye, and it makes you feel very small as you realize what took place there at one time.

The Berean youth club kids have been down the raging white-water rapids of the Colorado River in a rubber raft. That, I guarantee you, will make you feel very small, as you find yourself caught up in a raging torrent of waters. You see a wall ten feet high of water in front of you, and a whole six feet deep, and the boat slams in it, and the wall comes down. You get the impression that you're in something pretty big.

Man's natural inclination is to be aware of, and to have a respect for, forces that are greater than he is. Certainly the men who are traveling in outer space have that sense of their smallness in the majesty of what surrounds them. The same is true of the vast expanses of the ocean, and what takes place under the ocean. Man feels very intimidated when he enters the world of the ocean. That's how man feels in the presence of some towering majesty like Mount Everest, with its snow and its ice and its winds. Man realizes that he's really quite helpless in the presence of some very powerful forces. If you tried to climb Mount Rainier, which is great fun to do, you have to climb it at night. You have to climb it with a helmet on that has a head light on it, like miners use, so that you can illuminate your path, because you cannot dare climb Mt. Rainier during the warm daylight hours because you're walking on shifting avalanches of snow and ice. And when you're up there, even in darkness, when everything is supposed to be hard and solid, you are aware of the fact that you're very, very small and helpless in the presence of some powerful forces.

That's the idea that the Scriptures are conveying to us. Man's smallness in God's creation places him, if he is wise, in the position of having a reverential awe of the God who made all this, and who keeps it all operating. This is the message of the psalmist in Psalm 8:1-4: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, who has set Your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You might still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider the heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the Son of man, that You visit him?" The psalmist has grasped the immensity of God's creation, and he wonders that God even pays attention to such a small little bug like man.

Therefore, the Scriptures tell us that it is the basic duty of man to fear God, and to fear Him in such a way that man obeys the commandments of God. In Ecclesiastes 12:13, Solomon sums up this issue when he says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God" (and there is the word again): "Fear God (and, consequently, associated with fearing God is), and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." What did you think was your whole duty? If you have any question about what God expects of you, here it is. You have it all concisely put together: First, stand in reverential awe of God. You better be afraid of Him. You better fear Him in terms of His Holiness, and undermining that holiness. Secondly, in order to avoid undermining that holiness, keep His commandments. That's what God wants you to do: Have a reverential respect for Him. Secondly, learn His word; secure the knowledge of doctrine; and, be positive to it. Function on His commandments. That's your whole duty.

**Priest; Ambassador; and, Soldier**

Indeed, if you will do that, you'll be fulfilling the three major responsibilities that you have as a member of the body of Christ. And that's the whole point of this. A reverential awe of God that results in obedience to doctrine that you have learned will enable you to fulfill those three things while you're taking your next breath here on this earth, so that you can fulfill your role as a priest of God. You have a priestly ministry. Each of us is a personal priest of God. You are an ambassador of God. Each of us is the witnessing ambassador to the unsaved world. And the third role is as a soldier. That is the whole Christian life right there: one; two; three. These are the three areas of ministry. They are the three responsibilities that we are called to: to be a priest of God, to represent ourselves privately before Him; secondly, to be an ambassador to the world, to represent the living God to the unsaved world, and to the Christian world ignorant of truth; and, third, to be a soldier who is engaged in the angelic conflict day-by-day, who is moving into the areas that Satan controls, and gaining the high ground of spiritual victory. All of this is entirely dependent upon fulfilling the basic duty of respect for God: fear God; and, keep His commandments.

We may add Deuteronomy 10:12 to that concept, where Moses reiterated the same idea to the people of Israel: "And Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, and to walk in all His ways." There you've got the same thing that you have in Ecclesiastes – to fear God, and to walk in His ways (obey truth). Then he expands on that a little bit, and adds: "And to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." If you cannot do the last part, you cannot love Him. And you cannot serve Him if first you do not fear Him, and then know His commandments, and respond in obedience to them.

This is a great torch. It provides us with so much that we need as individual believers in order to know how to move through life. That is what the concept of "fear of the Lord" means. It means a dread (a terror) of God in terms of the fact of His holiness, and that God will not compromise His integrity. As an unbeliever, you should be in fear of God relative to His Holiness. As a believer, you should be in fear of God relative to His Holiness.

Next time, we're going to look at some of the specific ways that the fear of God affects the life of the believer, and some of the specific things that come about as the result of fearing God. If believers were faithful in this respect alone, in permitting this ministry of the Holy Spirit to prosper in their life, and if they had a personal dread of violating the holiness of God, it would take the individual believers into worlds of happiness; personal prosperity; and, significant living that you never dreamed possible. The fear of the Lord is one of the great provisions of God the Holy Spirit. We'll look at more of the details next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

[**Back to the Revelation index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/revelation.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)