

Week 25

June 18 - 24

2 Kings 10:32-15:29; 15:32-16:9; 2 Chronicles 22:10-28:15; Isaiah 6:1-11:16;
Amos 1-9; Jonah 1-4; Micah 1:1-16

This week's theme is the fear of the Lord. This is an often puzzling subject and can be difficult to fully comprehend. God loves us and we love Him in return, and yet we are also supposed to fear Him. Sometimes this fear is a sense of awe and respect because of the holiness of God and the fact that He is so vastly different than we are. Sometimes this fear of God is because, as the sovereign Lord, He is the one who judges our actions and thoughts and has the power and authority to save and to condemn at the same time. -D.C.

June 18th

2 Kings 10:32-12:16; 2 Chronicles 22:10-24:22. "Learned Helplessness"

At lunch today I had to do a little maintenance on our home computer that my wife uses for work. I suggested to her that she begin to solve these problems without my help. She promptly declared that, as long as I was around, she didn't need to; she had a 'learned helplessness' when it came to our computer.

King Joash took the throne when he was seven years old. I wonder if his early ascension didn't develop in him a learned helplessness. As a child he surely had been taught, if not just told, what to do by Jehoiada. He never developed an ability to think independently. Joash remained fully dependent upon the input and influence of others around him as is clear from his departure from the Lord following Jehoiada's death.

Do you suffer from a spiritual learned helplessness? May you fear the Lord and may your faith mature that you will "no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth" (Eph. 4:14).

June 19th

2 Kings 12:17-13:11, 14-25; 2 Chronicles 24:23-27. "Why Fear God?"

"Have no fear, have no fear, said the cat in the hat." I read that line today at lunch in the book I was reading to my daughter. As I was reading it, I thought about our theme this week and the subsequent mess that the cat in the hat made. Fortunately for the children in the story, the cat cleaned up his mess, but life doesn't always play out like a Dr. Seuss book.

Today we read about more kings over God's people that made one mess after the other. The idolatry they allowed showed a total lack of fear towards the LORD. What do we see as a result of this lack of fear? We see the consequence of incurring God's judgment. Both Joash, king of Judah (2 Chr. 24:24), and Jehoahaz, king of Israel (2 Kings 13:2-3), invited God's judgment on their people because they didn't fear God and practiced idolatry.

So why should we fear God? We fear God because He is the one who judges our actions (Eccl. 12:13-14). We fear God because of the consequences that result when our actions invite His judgment.

June 20th

2 Kings 13:12-13; 14:1-27; 15:1-5; 2 Chronicles 25:1-26:21; Jonah 1-4. "Too Familiar"

We are all very familiar with the story of Jonah; it is after all a whale of a tale. Sorry, I know – bad joke. But seriously, I encourage you to look at the story with a fresh perspective and consider for me, if you will, the use of irony in this historical story.

Jonah, a prophet of God should model a proper fear of God. And yet, as you may have noticed, the sailors and the wicked Ninevites demonstrated more fear of God than Jonah. How can this be? How can people who do not know God as well as Jonah does, demonstrate more fear than Jonah would?

One possible explanation that I would have for this is familiarity. Jonah was far more familiar with the Lord than was anyone else in the story. I think this curse of familiarity can happen to anyone who has known the Lord for a long time. We can grow so accustomed to His grace and forgiveness that we forget about His wrath and justice in dealing with sin.

May you fear God like someone who is encountering Him for the first time.

June 21st

Amos 1-6. "Declared Righteous"

I want you to think of that one person or that particular group of people that you know for certain deserves God's judgment.

For God's people that would have been the surrounding nations against whom Amos declared God's judgment. How popular Amos' message must have been as he spoke of the very thing God's people wanted to hear. And then that all changed as God turned His focus toward His own people declaring judgment against their wickedness.

Through Amos, Israel and Judah learned that you cannot pray for God's judgment on sin and not be included in the process. This is because God does not show favoritism in his judgments (Rom. 2:11).

So why are we to fear God? We do not fear God because He is some kind of vindictive or cruel deity. Rather, we fear him because He is just in His judgments and cannot allow sin to go unpunished.

Faith in Christ does not spare us from God's judgment, for all men will be judged (Matt. 16:27). But our faith allows us to be declared righteous because of Christ's atoning sacrifice in spite of our being judged guilty.

June 22nd

2 Kings 14:28-29; 15:6-29; 2 Chronicles 26:22-23; Isaiah 6:1-13; Amos 7:1-9:5. "Fear of Santa"

Like many kids, my son had a paralyzing fear of Santa Clause when he was younger. I find this phenomenon very curious since there is nothing about this character, even if he were real, that is to be truly feared. The worst he could do would be to give you coal in your stocking instead of toys.

The fear Isaiah experienced when he encountered the LORD was a more legitimate fear, I believe. Certainly, Isaiah was familiar with God's declaration to Moses that no one may see God and live (Ex. 33:20).

Why is it that we observe so few people who exhibit a genuine fear of God? It is directly related to how they view God. Isaiah feared God when he saw Him for who He really is. People who view God more like a divine Santa Clause find that there is nothing to fear. They believe that God is merely a kind, loving, benevolent being who can only withhold gifts, not bring judgment.

May you come to a full understanding of who God is and realize that it is right to fear God.

June 23rd

2 Kings 15:32-16:9; 2 Chronicles 27:1-28:15; Isaiah 7:1-25; Micah 1:1-16.

"Testing God"

"Do not test the Lord your God" (Matt. 4:7).

While in the wilderness, Jesus quoted the above verse from Deuteronomy 6:16. His purpose in quoting it was to fend off the temptation from Satan. Satan wanted Jesus to test God's promise of protection (Psalm 91:11-12).

In Isaiah 7, King Ahaz is in a similar situation. God has promised him protection from his enemies (Isa. 7:3-9) and then invites Ahaz to ask for the most difficult sign possible (Isa. 7:10-11). Now we know from the historical narratives in Kings and Chronicles that Ahaz was not righteous. So, I am surprised by his response of refusing to ask for a sign. He actually demonstrates a proper fear of the Lord in this instance.

If you were in Ahaz' shoes, what would you have done?

Someone who fears the Lord also knows what it means to trust in the Lord. When we ask God for a sign to confirm His word, we reveal a lack of faith and trust in that word.

May you learn to trust God at His word each and every day.

June 24th

Isaiah 8:1-11:16. "No Fear"

There is something about refusing to show fear that is a rite of passage for boys as they seek to become men. I remember wanting to have a persona of having no fear in high school so badly that I wore shirts that even said "No Fear" on them.

Isaiah was told in chapter 8:11-14 that he was to only fear the LORD Almighty. This message holds true for us today as well. If we fear God we don't need to fear anything else, including death, for Jesus has conquered death.

I often hear Christians speak of what they fear might happen. They tell me of how they fear our country is falling apart; or they fear that the church is selling out; or they fear that their rights are being eroded. Instead of constantly fearing these things, why don't we try to trust God and His word?

God's word tells us that in our faith we have victory through Jesus (1 Cor. 15:57; 1 John 5:4). Jesus, the eternal Word, declared that, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." (Matt. 16:18). In addition, Revelation 20:11-15 tells us that God will ultimately triumph and remove sin and death. Fear God and nothing else!

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