

Rediscovering Reverence: Setting Our Hearts to Treasure God Above All Else

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‘Gather the people to me, and I will make them hear my very words, so that they will learn to hold me in awe as long as they live on earth, and so that they will teach their children.’ Deut 4:10, CJB






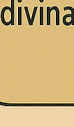

**“Don’t regard as alliance what this people calls alliance,
and don’t fear what they fear or be awestruck by it;
but Adonai–Tzva’ot — consecrate him!
Let him be the object of your fear and awe! Isa 8:12–13, CJB**

“Our God is an awesome God, who reigns from Heaven above...” More than likely, you recognize these lyrics from one of the most beloved praise and worship songs written. It’s a joy and easy to sing that God is awesome, yet as believers, do our lives show that we truly hold Him in awe? The importance of revering God can’t be stressed enough because not only does He instruct us to (as we see in the key verses above) but it is His due, and it is for our good always.

I’ve learned through the ups and especially the downs that it’s important to stay watchful over yourself, checking that your decisions and actions are in line with maintaining a sense of reverence for the true and living God. Why? Because it can be a slippery slope downhill and doesn’t always take much^a (if not checked) for your lack of reverence for Him to take hold as a common lifestyle, living life as everyone else around you. This negatively affects you, as well as future generations as they observe.

There’s a valuable lesson to be learned of what NOT to do from the lifestyle the Israelites had so foolishly chosen for themselves as described in II Kings 17. To God’s displeasure, they had begun doing things their own way instead of His way, completely abandoning Him and His instructions. Here’s a visual summary below to help put this in perspective for you.

Read all of II Kings Chapter 17 and see if you don't get frustrated with the Israelites. They had turned their backs to God after having experienced His goodness and protection in miraculous ways. He had provided for and protected them. They had experienced close encounters, including at Mount Sinai where they heard His voice out of the midst of fire. They were awestruck and filled with such reverential fear that they requested Moses speak with them instead of God. ^b They recognized that He was mightier, more powerful, and more sovereign than any other being. Yet, as a nation so highly favored and set apart as God's own, they chose to repeat the disgusting lifestyle of the previous pagan nations. Not only had they rejected the true and living God, but they had decided to worship and serve false deities and objects—literally **NOTHING**s. They pursued after worthless things and became worthless themselves (II Kings 17:15, CJB). They reduced themselves from what God had intended for them, which was to be a nation looked upon by others as having wisdom and understanding, living justly. ^c A nation who had Adonai, the One and Only God, as their God.

GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS	vs.	ISRAEL'S CHOICES
 Be careful not to offer your burnt offering just anywhere you see, do it in the place He chooses. Deut. 12:13		 Built high places for themselves anywhere. II Kings 17:9
 You are to have no other gods before me. Deut. 5:7		 Feared other gods II Kings 17:7
 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through fire. Deut. 18:10		 Sacrificed their own children to idols II Kings 17:17
 Do not practice divination or fortune-telling. Lev. 19:26		 Used divination and magic spells II Kings 17:17

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But let's not get too frustrated with the Israelites before examining ourselves because the temptations are just as strong for us today as they were for the Israelites thousands of years ago. While the literal worship of idols may seem less common today, the concept of idolatry can be understood in a broader sense, encompassing anything that takes the place of God in your heart, such as material possessions, another human being, hobbies, career, social status, etc. It's easy this day and time to become fanatical about things that don't hold any Kingdom value, things that only serve our self-interest, while being indifferent about God and His Word.

But God is good! Because of His everlasting love and compassion, He repeatedly gave warnings to the Israelites through His prophets and He does the same today. Even in our rejection or disobedience to Him, He is faithful and ready to forgive—provided we recognize our sin and repent. He longs for a covenant relationship with us. In the same way that the Israelites were chosen and set apart as God's own, so are we who have accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior. We are a chosen generation^d; therefore as a people set apart

and highly favored, we must reject the lifestyle of the world around us. Let's not reduce ourselves from where we are seated with Christ, which was made possible by His shed blood. So begin examining your heart, and dethron^e any idols. Lean on the help of the Holy Spirit. Keep God first—only He is to be worshipped and glorified!

The greatest example there is as to how we should live in holy fear of God is the life of Christ. He taught, loved, and lived in a way that magnified God and His Word. He spent time in God's presence. He obeyed God. He spent time teaching on the priceless value of God's Kingdom, that there is nothing on earth that can compare to knowing and serving Him. In fact, He explained that the greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22: 37 NKJV). When you love God this way and your heart is completely yielded to Him, others are drawn to Him through your light. We are called to live good lives, letting the light of God shine in the darkness because He desires to be known and glorified by ALL.

Scriptural References

a Woe to those who begin by pulling at transgression with a thread, but end by dragging sin along as if with a cart rope. Isaiah 5:18 CJB

b 18 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. 19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." 20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." Ex 20:18-20 NKJV

c 6 Therefore, observe them; and follow them; for then all peoples will see you as having wisdom and understanding. When they hear of all these laws, they will say, 'This great nation is surely a wise and understanding people.' 7 For what great nation is there that has God as close to them as Adonai our God is, whenever we call on him? 8 What great nation is there that has laws and rulings as just as this entire Torah which I am setting before you today? Deut 4:6-8 CJB

d But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light... I Peter 2:9 NKJV

e but to live such good lives among the pagans that even though they now speak against you as evil-doers, they will, as a result of seeing your good actions, give glory to God on the Day of his coming. I Peter 2:12 CJB

