

Embracing the Goodness of God



Lesson Objective:

The purpose of this lesson is for the disciple to gain understanding of the nature of God's goodness, and how knowing that God is good can inspire trust, hope, joy, and an anticipation of His expressive favor.

Key Scripture:

***Psalms 34:8-9** O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! ⁹ O fear the LORD, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no want.*

The Revelation of Elohim

Key Point: ***In the revelation of Elohim, the holiness of God created distance from man.***

Moses trudged steadily towards a meadow he knew well, where the grass was green and a water stream had been blocked up with rocks to create the perfect spot to feed and water the sheep. This is a trip he had made many times before, but this time it seemed quieter than the times before. The quietness he felt had little to do with the braying of the sheep or their feet pounding the ground as they followed. The quietness came from within. His thoughts had finally finished running the previous years over and over in his mind. The questions as to why his birth was miraculous and why he was rescued by an Egyptian princess and then raised in the house of Pharaoh had all died within him. The conditions of Israel's enslavement to Egypt were all behind him now, as he settled the issue within his mind, it was all outside of his ability to do anything about it. The feelings of his failure, the helplessness of his people's state of being, and plaguing memory of their cries for God's help were all disappearing in the shadows of a former life fading like they were a nightmarish dream.

"Where was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Doesn't He care what is happening to His people? Does He care about people at all? I stepped in to do something about it, but God wasn't there to back me up. Was it because of me? Did I fail God?" These were just some of the questions he no doubt had finally put to rest. The many years that had passed, only confirmed to Moses that the God of Israel had abandoned them and has left all of humanity to fend for themselves. Moses had concluded in his mind that God Almighty was somewhere way up in the heavens, too busy to be concerned about the affairs of man, let alone a bunch of slaves in Egypt. He had finally come to the resolve to live the rest of his days as a shepherd and raise his sons to all be shepherds as

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well. He had finally released all sense of obligation as to his people's plight believing, "There's nothing I could do." However, Elohim was about to step upon the earth to draw men closer. He had a plan of delivering His people from slavery by revealing Himself in a way man had never known Him before.

To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God revealed Himself as *Elohim*, which simply means God. Although Abraham is recognized as the friend of God, and in that friendship was the privilege to interceded on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham was limited in the revelation of God. While the encounters they experienced with *Elohim* were significant and life altering, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had a distant relationship with God. Elohim was the all powerful, eternal, and holy God who dwelt way out in heaven somewhere, while they were surviving on earth. He would visit them on occasion to affirm His covenant and promises, but these visits were very infrequent.

Elohistic Names of God:

From this distant relationship, *Elohim* became known as:

1. ***Elohim Qadosh*** – God the Holy One (Job 6:10);
2. ***El Elyon*** – God Most High (Gen.14:18-22);
3. ***El Shadday*** – God Almighty; (Gen.17:1; 35:11; 48:3)
4. ***El Olam*** – The Everlasting God (Gen.21:31);
5. ***Elah Shamayin*** – The God of Heaven (Ez.5:11).

From their distant observation of God and His limited interaction in their lives, Israel's forefathers recognized *Elohim's* nature as being holy, all-powerful, eternal, and far greater than all other gods.

Key Point: ***Holiness is a core value of Elohim.***

Exodus 6:2-3 ² God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord; ³ and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them.

When Moses delivered Israel out of slavery to Egypt by the powerful hand of God. He brought them to the mountain of the Lord where all the people could experience the presence of God for themselves. Moses, along with all the people of Israel, carried an inheritance of the knowledge of God as they came to know Him as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." But at Mount Sinai, Israel would experience God in a new revelation. He would appear to them as "Yahweh" or "I Am that I Am" and in the revelation of His name, the glory of His ways would be revealed.

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Key Point: ***Elohim reveals the attributes of God's identity, whereas Yahweh reveals the nature of God's character.***

The names of God reveal the nature of His identity. In the disclosure of His name "Yaweh" the works of God reveal His character. His name "Yahweh" was so revered that Israel chose to not speak or write His name. So they substituted "Yahweh" with *Adonai*, or *Jehovah*, which simply means "Lord." As "I Am" demonstrated His hand and works among His people, they attached these attributes to *Jehovah's* name.

Jehovahistic Names of God:

1. **Jehovah Rapha** – I Am the Healer (Ex.15:26)
2. **Jehovah Jirah** – I Am the Provider (Gen.22:4)
3. **Jehovah Shalom** – I Am Peace (Jdg.6:24)
4. **Jehovah Nisi** – I Am your Banner, a Tower of Refuge (Ex.17:15; Ps.46:1; 50:7; 62:8; 94:2; Pr.18:10; Joel 3:16)
5. **Jehovah Shammah** – I Am Ever Present (Josh.3:10; Ezek.48:35)
6. **Jehovah Tsidkenu** – I Am your Righteousness (Ex.9:27; Jer.23:6; 33:16)
7. **Jehovah Qadash** – I Am the One who Sanctifies (Ex.31:13; Lev.20:8; 21:8,15,23; 22:16,32; Ezek.20:12; 37:28)
8. **Jehovah Qanna** – I Am Jealous for You (Ex.34:14; Deut.5:9; Josh.24:19; Ezek.23:25; 39:25; Na.1:2; Zech.1:14; 1Cor.10:22)
9. **Jehovah Shaphat** – I Am a Righteous Judge (Gen.18:25; Jdg.11:27; Job 23:7; Psa.7:11; 50:6; 75:7; 94:2; Ac.10:42; 2Tim.4:8; Heb.12:23; Jms.4:12; 4:9)
10. **Jehovah Rohi** – I Am your Shepherd (Ps.23:1; 78:52; 80:1; Isa.40:11; Jer.31:10)

Key Point: ***The revelation of Yahweh to Moses was with greater glory than the revelation Abraham received.***

The glory of “I Am” manifested in healing, provision, peace, protection and safety. He manifested through the sacrifices of His people in providing for them righteousness and sanctification. Even in discipline, His glory is revealed in providing mercy through repentance. God takes His children from glory to glory.¹ In this we can see that God revealed Himself to Moses in a greater measure than He did with Abraham.

The attribute of God’s nature revealed in His identity as *Elohim* is His holiness. Holiness is a core value of Elohim. Those to whom God was revealed as *Elohim*, knew Him to be the “Holy One.”² Holy does not merely mean to be pure, without sin, and perfect, although these characteristics are included. It basically means, to be set apart and committed for purpose. Anything that deters off the course of this purpose is what is defined as “sin,” meaning to “miss the mark” or goal. Thus the expressions of God’s power, and His interaction with man, was with purpose of removing the obstacles to man’s purposes and to reconcile him towards His designed destiny. The laws of God were basically the important values of God for man in managing his choices and remain on course towards the will of God.

Revelation of God’s Goodness

Moses approached the people of Israel and Pharaoh with a mission from God to deliver His people from slavery. Moses brought them a revelation of God no one has ever received before. “*I Am Who I Am has sent me to you,*” he declared with authority and power as he demonstrated his mission with signs and wonders. Plague after plague

¹ 2Corinthians 3:18

² Job 6:10; Lev.11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Psa.16:10; Isa.10:17; 57:15; Jer. Hos.11:9; Hab.1:12; 1Pet.1:6 (cf. 1Jn.2:20)

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God demonstrated that He is El Elyon, the God Most High, as He confronted every god of Egypt with proof of His superiority over them. God was true to His word, *"I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go."*³ But Pharaoh's heart remained hard. Seeing Elohim confront every god of Egypt, which manifested in the suffering of Egypt under each plague and then witnessing Yahweh's hand of protection over Israel should have been enough for Pharaoh to bow his heart to Elohim. But God had surrendered Pharaoh's heart to a hardness Pharaoh had chosen.

Key Point: *The revelation of "Yahweh" came with an invitation to build relationship through experience.*

Reacting to Pharaoh's hard-hearted decisions, Moses returned to the Lord, wondering why his mission was not being successful. It was one thing to have the revelation of God's name "I Am Who I Am," and another thing to walk through the experiences of crisis and witness "I Am Who I Am" manifesting in real protection over His people. It is in these experiences that Moses came to know the truth in reality that God is "I Am Who I Am." In every plague Egypt experienced, God was inviting all of Israel into an encounter with Yahweh in such a way that it would change their relationship with Him. God would no longer be a distant 'God in Heaven.' He would be "I Am Who I Am" among them. What appeared to be unsuccessful attempts to fulfill God's commission were actually opportunities for Israel to know the reality of "I Am" among them. Yahweh did not only want His people to be set free from slavery, He wanted them to be sent with the wealth of Egypt.

From the point that Israel was released from slavery with the wealth of Egypt, their miraculous passage through the Red Sea, and then witnessing Yahweh's protection, provision, and direction through their journey across the Wilderness of Sin, "Yahweh" continued to reveal His nature to Israel with experiential encounters.

At their arrival at Mount Sinai, boundary stakes were set around the base of the Mountain of God with strict instruction that no one, not even beasts, were allowed to cross. *Elohim* was going to ascend from heaven and establish a covenant with Israel that would enable *Yahweh* to dwell among His people. Everyone in the camp consecrated themselves in preparation for that day. But they were not expecting what they would experience as the Holy One ascended upon the earth. The mountain erupted like it was a raging furnace. The earth shook beneath their feet as billows of smoke surrounded and concealed the all-consuming fire of Elohim's glory. Their fear was only compounded as the voice of *Elohim* spoke from within the smoke and fire that thundered like the blasts of many trumpets. "Come to me, Moses," came the voice of God. Confirmed as God's chosen leader, Moses walked past the boundary markers, up the mountain, and disappeared behind the veil of smoke.

Key Point: *In the manifestation of the holiness of Elohim, man responded in the fear of the Lord.*

In the manifestation of the holiness of *Elohim*, man's response was, the fear of the Lord. However, the fear of the Lord brought two different reactions. One of the first instructions by God to Moses was for him to turn around and go back to the people and warn them. Even though they were all told not to cross the boundary to gaze upon God behind the smoke, some of the people were ready to break past the boundaries and approach the manifest presence of God to look upon His glory.

Key Point: *The fear of the Lord carries two responses: 1) create distance from God 2) draw closer to God.*

³ Exodus 3:20

The other reaction to the fear of the Lord was felt by the majority of the people. Sheer terror shook them to their very bones causing many to want to turn and run in the opposite direction from God. For some, the fear of the Lord inspired them to draw nearer to God, while in others it reduced them to trembling beings wanting to run and stand afar off.⁴ It was the fear that stirred Israel to run and hide that prompted the leaders to say to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." To which Moses responded, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." In other words, the people were not responding in the right kind of the fear of the Lord. The test was this, Are you going to desire God's presence and draw close to Him or are you satisfied with a distant relationship? Israel chose to stand afar off while watching Moses enter pass the thick cloud of darkness and draw near to God.⁵

Exodus 24:9-11 ⁹ Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. ¹¹ Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank.

Behind the smoke veil the elders and leaders of Israel beheld Jehovah. And in His presence they communed together. How far up the mountain did they go? It does not say. But I imagine it was to the place of Moses' first encounter with Jehovah when He spoke from the burning bush. A great leader will lead others to the place of their personal experience. From this point of encounter, Moses takes with him Joshua as they together ascended into higher heights. At some point Joshua could go no further and Moses entered into the manifest presence of Jehovah.

Exodus 33:12-17 ¹² Then Moses said to the Lord, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.' ¹³ "Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people."

¹⁴ And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."

¹⁵ Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. ¹⁶ "For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?"

¹⁷ The Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name."

Key Point: *The holiness of Elohim requires justice for breaking covenant with the punishment of a death sentence.*

It didn't take long for Israel to sin and violate their covenant with God. Even before Moses could return from the Mountain of the Lord with the stone tablets of God's commandments, Israel was worshipping an idol. The holiness of Elohim requires justice for a broken covenant with an impending death sentence. However, Moses

⁴ Exodus 20:18

⁵ Exodus 20:18-21

mediated through intercession on Israel's behalf. The greatest point that Moses brought before the Holy One, who is set apart and motivated with intent purpose, *"If Your presence does not go with us, what will make us different from the other nations?"*

Jehovah and Moses entered into a relationship like none other before Him. Whereas Abraham was recognized as the friend of God, Moses likewise became a friend of God who communed together face to face. From this relationship Moses interceded for Israel.

Moses finding favor with the Lord is directly connected to the Lord knowing him by his name. Moses' name means, "to draw up." Moses' nature is revealed in his name, "to draw up." When God first appeared to Moses in the burning bush, in the fear of the Lord, Moses responded by drawing towards it. It wasn't until Moses responded to that draw that God spoke from the burning bush. When Moses approached the burning bush he was warned that the place had become a holy ground. Moses responded by taking his shoes off and drawing closer. When the Mountain of the Lord erupted by God's holy presence like an explosion of a raging furnace, Moses did not shrink back. Instead, in the fear of the Lord, Moses responded to the draw to come closer to God's presence. When God said to Moses, *"...you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name."* He was basically saying, "I have placed my identity and call in you and I have recognized Me in you by your words and behavior."

Key Point: *Man's response to the revelation of Yahweh is to draw closer for relationship.*

As man's response to the revelation of *Elohim* was in the fear of the Lord. Man's response to *Jehovah (I Am that I Am)* is to be drawn unto Him.

In Moses' quest to draw closer to Jehovah, he makes this request, *"... if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight."* Moses is preparing to confront God in an area that seems contrary to His ways. God is going to punish Israel for her sin by removing His presence from her. Moses recognizes that he is in a position of closeness with God and therefore pulls upon that favor to gain greater favor. He asks to know the ways of God so that he could know Him more. He knew that the ways of God are interlinked with knowing Him. Whereas the holiness of God demands justice resulting in separation of Himself from Israel, Moses delves deeper beyond *"Elohim is Holy"* and intercedes with *"Yahweh is Good."*

Exodus 33:18-19 ¹⁸ Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" ¹⁹ And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

Key Point: *God provided a way for us to press beyond the fear of Elohim as being holy into experiencing the drawing of nature of Yahweh as being good.*

The audacity of Moses to then ask for more seems over the top. But it raises a question we all should be asking. How much of God can we experience this side of heaven? Is there more of His glory that is available for us to know than what we have experienced? How far we have fallen from His glory will only be realized as we continue to climb our way back up the mountain of our knowledge of Him.

In direct connection to Moses' request to see *Jehovah's* glory, the Lord associates His glory with His goodness. The goodness of the Lord is directly associated with Jehovah's identity and nature revealed in His name "I Am that I Am." As His name *Elohim* is connected to the attribute of His nature as Holy. His name *Jehovah* or "I Am that I Am" is connected to the attribute of His nature of being good. As God is Holy, so also is the reality that God is Good.

Key Point: ***In the glory of "I Am Good," Moses receives the vision of God's presence dwelling among His people.***

It was in the presence of "I Am Good" that Moses receives the vision God has for dwelling in the midst of His people. Every detail was specified for the building of a Tabernacle that would host His abiding presence. The Tabernacle would consist of three parts; the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. It was in the outer court that the issue of holiness was dealt with. It contained an altar, upon which the sacrifices of animals would re-present the Lamb of God that would one day be offered for the sins of humanity. Before the entrance into the Holy Place there was a basin made of polished silver that mirrored the priest's reflection as he cleansed himself prior to entering the Holy Place. Redemption and the baptism of repentance were thus illustrated in the fulfillment of Christ Jesus.

Behind the several layers of the Tabernacle's exterior was the Holy Place that contained the Table of Showbread, a Golden Lampstand and an altar of incense. These too were symbolic of Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, and as the High Priest of our intercession. Within the Holy of Holies was the Ark of God. Within the Ark were placed three items: the stone tablets upon which were inscribed by the finger of God the Ten Commandments; the rod of Aaron that miraculously budded, blossomed and bore fruit, affirming Aaron's role as High Priest; and a jar of Manna, that testified of God's miraculous provision.

It is interesting to note the coinciding resemblance of the Mountain of God with the Tabernacle of God. At the base of the mountain boundaries were placed for the purpose of keeping unholy people from trespassing onto holy ground. To venture past the barrier that *Elohim's* holiness created, there was a requirement of an atoning sacrifice. The covering of smoke prevented those without the barriers of holiness from seeing the glory of Jehovah within. The leaders and elders of Israel were permitted to go beyond the barriers of holiness up to a certain point of the mountain. It was there that they experienced the illumination of God and ate bread together, as in the Holy Place before the Table of Showbread and the golden lampstand. Moses ventured further up the mountain to the place where he offered intercession on behalf of Israel, resembling the Altar of Incense. It was in this place where Moses was allowed to peek beyond the veil to behold the glory of God.

Exodus 33:20-23 ²⁰ But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" ²¹ Then the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; ²² and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. ²³ "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

Key Point: ***Moses reached the boundary of his potential and discovered the limit of the Old Covenant Age.***

Moses ventured to the place of limitation. He went as far as he could in experiencing God's glory in the age he was within. God allowed His glory to pass before Moses, but he was not allowed to look upon His face. This level of experience in God's glory was reserved for a future age.

Exodus 34:5-7 ⁵ The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. ⁶ Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

Key Point: ***God's glory is directly related to His goodness.***

The Glory is directly interchangeable with God's goodness and is associated with His name, "I Am that I Am." As the goodness of God passed before Moses, the Lord declared His name and the attributes of His character of goodness. God is, *I Am that I Am, I Am Elohim, I Am Compassionate, I Am Gracious, I Am Patient, I Am Kind, I Am Truthful, I Am Faithful, I Am Forgiving, and I Am a Righteous Judge.* The revelation of God's character is where we see the expressions of the primary motivation of God's nature - His goodness.

Key Point: ***Although the nature of God is good, He will not violate His nature as being Holy.***

In the revelation of *Jehovha's* glory in connection with His goodness is linked a very important association, "yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished..." Although the nature of God is Good, He will not violate His nature as being Holy. The declaration of the issue of justice being dealt with is brought into the expression of His goodness. The expression of God's goodness in righteous justice is later demonstrated in the offering of His son upon the cross. The justice of *Elohim* was satisfied in Christ Jesus.

Exodus 34:29-30 ²⁹ *It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him.* ³⁰ *So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.*

Key Point: ***Beholding the glory of God's goodness transforms us with radiant glory.***

It was beholding the glory of God's goodness that transformed Moses. When he came down the mountain his face shined with the light of God's glory. It was the goodness of God that caused Moses' face to shine. *I Am that I Am* declared His goodness and the revelation of His nature and character carried transforming power that caused Moses to shine.

Key Point: ***Those who draw close to Yahweh will experience a greater glory - but the religious mindset seeks to justify their lack and distance by focusing on God's holiness.***

Moses' encounter with God upon the mountain brought a contrast between him and Israel. What Moses carried would be made available to them all. However, the illumination of glory upon his face confronted an issue that ruled Israel's hearts. The illegitimate fear that chose distance from God instead of drawing closer to Him now sought to cover the face of the one who ventured beyond their comfort zone. In an effort to maintain their distance from God, they compelled Moses to put a veil over his face.

Those who experience the glory of God will also be confronted with such mindsets. Many are satisfied with their distant relationship with God. When others reveal that there is greater glory, it confronts the religious mindset that justifies their lack and distance from God. They prefer to remain in ignorance because the truth will require change and disrupt their comfort zones. Church history bears witness that those who experience greater measures of God's favor will typically be ostracized from the church - which justifies their distance from God.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ through Moses

John 5:39-47 ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. ⁴¹ "I do not receive glory from men; ⁴² but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. ⁴³ "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? ⁴⁵ "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷ "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

Key Point: **Jesus was continuously confronted by the religious mindset that justified their lack and distance from God.**

Jesus brought from heaven the revelation of the glory of God's goodness. Everything He did and said revealed "I Am" good. As the exact representation of the Father, Jesus was *compassionate, gracious, patient, kind, truthful, faithful, forgiving* and *just*. As Jesus revealed the Father, he was confronted by the religious mindset that justified their fear in creating distance from God. In this confrontation, Jesus stated that Moses accused them of their ignorance in that Moses revealed the Messiah. Moses was a type of Jesus. Jesus ascended from the Father bearing the radiance of the Father's glory. Moses brought down the Mountain of God a measure of God's glory written on tablets of stone. That glory was in the laws of God that created a standard by which His people could draw near and dwell in God's presence among them. However, this glory was limited in that it did not provide internal transformation but simply pointed to the faults of external behaviors.

2 Corinthians 3:7-11 ⁷ But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, ⁸ how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? ⁹ For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. ¹⁰ For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹ For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

Key Point: **Jesus came with a greater revelation of God's glory by revealing His name, "Abba Father."**

What was the purpose of Moses' mountain top experience? To receive from God the strategy of bringing His presence from a distance, overcoming the boundaries, limitations, and constraints, so that "I Am" could dwell among the people. What was the purpose for the Son of God descending from heaven to earth? So that the presence and glory of the Father may dwell within the people He loves. Jesus came with a greater glory. The reality that the nature of God as Holy is significant. But, there is a greater reality in that God is Good. This is seen in the statement that James 2:13 makes, "mercy triumphs over judgment."

To Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God revealed Himself by His name "Elohim." Elohim expressed to them his nature as being Holy. In the presence of the Holy One, man responded in the fear of the Lord.

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To Moses, God revealed Himself by His name “*Jehovah – I Am that I Am.*” Jehovah manifested to Moses and Israel His nature of goodness. In the presence of “*I Am Good*” they witnessed the characteristics of His goodness as being compassionate, gracious, kind, patient, kind, truthful, faithful, forgiving and just. In the presence of Yahweh, man’s response is to draw closer to the Lord.

Jesus brought a greater revelation of God by a name never associated with God before. By His name, “*Abba Father*” Jesus presented a deeper aspect of the nature and character of God. The apostle John assessed the Father’s true nature when he said, “*God is love.*”⁶ In the presence of *God is Love* His children experience His unconditional love and grace as He draws all men unto Himself⁷ that they may become one with Him.⁸

Key Point: *With the revelation of God as a Father comes the blessing of becoming one with God.*

As we become one with God, it is then that we truly represent all of whom God is. In the fullness of who God is, the love of God will motivate our passions, the goodness of God will manifest in what we do, and the holiness of God will reveal the way we are. We will thus shine with the glory of God and become a glorious church. The reputation of being the Father’s representatives on earth is to be one of holiness – separated from the world’s agenda with the purpose of doing the will of God.

The apostle Paul lists the fruit of oneness with God in Galatians 5:22 as being, *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* Living from oneness with God is what nullifies the necessity of the law. For in oneness, the laws of the Spirit of God are written upon our hearts. In God describing the glory in His goodness, the fruits of the Spirit become paralleled with the expression of being one with the Spirit of God.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

Key Point: *When we behold God in His goodness and love, we will express goodness and loving kindness*

We are transformed into the image we behold. From Israel’s distant perspective of God, they created an image of what they believed God was like. It was an image they could relate to and worship. But it was a false image that did not convey the reality of God, which limited His recognition, and violated His holiness, goodness, and love. A bull was respected for its strength. But if you get close enough, it will harm you. That image conveyed strength that demands respect with a fear that requires distance. Thus, Israel became a nation that executed judgment to surrounding nations and violently cleansed the land. If our image of God is that of a harsh judge who sits waiting for us to fail so that He can execute judgment and punishment, then that is the image we will model. Christian fathers and mothers who abuse their children will typically have this false image of God. However, if we are beholding God in His goodness and love, we will become good and loving.

⁶ 1John 4:7

⁷ John 12:32

⁸ John 17

The Revelation of Jesus Reveals the Father

Key Point: *If we are not representing God in His goodness, we are presenting a false image of God.*

Whenever there is tragedy such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, and even terrorists attacks that devastate cities and traumatize a nation, it is typical for the religious "prophet of God" to begin pointing fingers of accusations while attributing these travesties as acts of God's judgment. What is the image of God they are conveying to the world? If it does not represent God's goodness and love along with His holiness, then they are depicting a false image of God. There is a term we use of a father who treats His children in such a manner. We call it child abuse. What father would destroy the homes and lives of his children in the name of punishment?

1 Peter 2:4-9 ⁴ *As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--* ⁵ *you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* ⁶ *For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."*

⁷ *Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,"* ⁸ *and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message--which is also what they were destined for.* ⁹ *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (NIV)*

Ephesians 2:19-22 ¹⁹ *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,* ²⁰ *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,* ²¹ *in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,* ²² *in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

Key Point: *As the Chief Cornerstone, Jesus Christ is perfect theology – He presented the Father as holy, good, and loving.*

Jesus is referred to as the Chief Cornerstone. This was a rock that was rejected as part of the wall because it was different. Instead, it was placed in the corner of the building. The cornerstone would set the parameters for the building. It became the joint whereby two walls became joined together to form one structurally sound building. When we think of Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone doctrinally, He becomes perfect theology.

There are core principles that are to be well established in our hearts and minds that become the lenses through which we see and deduce as reality. They become the way we interpret or approach life. These values are the default switch that everything falls back to when things seem construed, out of alignment, or off track. When circumstances around us are hectic, chaotic, or traumatic, these core principles keep us from spinning off track and out of control.

In the city of San Francisco there are transport trains that carry passengers throughout the city. These passenger cars ride on two rails. But in order for these cars to travel from point A to point B they require power. On the top

of the lead car there is a long pole that connects the drive car to an electrical power source. Should there be a break in either the power source, or any of the two tracks, the train fails to reach its destination. In the same way. Each of us have been called, equipped, and empowered to reach a destination established by God. His call has been embedded into the DNA or our inner man. But there are three things that are required so that we reach success and arrive at our destiny. One of the tracks is called holiness. The second track is called goodness. These two tracks have got to run parallel at all times to keep the train on course. But it's the third aspect that is the most important. It is the love of God that motivates and empowers us in a forward motion. It is love that releases supernatural power into our journey.

Key Point: *Two square angles create a corner – one side represents holiness and the other as goodness - these are both anchored in the center by love.*

The holiness, goodness, and the love of God demonstrated through Jesus Christ are chief cornerstones that set the parameters of our foundation and structure in theology. Jesus exemplified holiness in that He lived purely devoted to the ways of the Father. He demonstrated goodness in His message and works to draw all men unto the Father. But He was also motivated and inspired by the love of the Father and became a representative of the Father's heart. There are two sides to every corner; holiness and goodness are these two sides. But they are both anchored in the love of the Father.

Two Themes to the Goodness of God

Theme One: Earth has the Capability and Potential to Become Like Heaven

There are two themes that express the goodness of God that are supposed to translate how we journey through life. The first theme is found in the Lord's prayer; *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*⁹ Jesus would not have us praying for something He had no intention on accomplishing. Thus, we know that it is the will of God that earth becomes like heaven. Heaven's values, culture and order are to invade earth's values, cultures, and order until earth looks like God's kingdom. Everything we say and do spring from this heartbeat of God; to make what He created for man look like what He governs. God made the heavens for Himself, but the earth He has given to man.¹⁰ God placed us as delegated authority over the earth. Through our co-laboring relationship with God through His delegated authority, earth has the capability of becoming like heaven.

Many people believe that this is going to take place in the millennium of Jesus Christ as a military invasion of His kingdom from heaven. However, Scriptures prove that it will actually happen through the obedience of His victorious church on earth.

⁹ Matthew 6:10

¹⁰ Psalm 115:16

Theme 2: God is Not Willing that Any Should Perish

The second theme is this, *“God is not willing that any should perish but that all would come to repentance.”*¹¹ This is not in support of the Universalist belief that everyone ends up going to heaven. But rather it reveals the passion and intent of the Father to draw all men unto Himself.¹²

If we could actually understand that the goodness of God is a cornerstone for our value system it will set the boundaries for what we will extend grace and mercy to and what we will not tolerate. God’s internal value system is so that we *“may prove what His will is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*¹³ This is important, because as we all will experience crisis, trauma, and loss, we don’t lose the foundation of our hope –the anticipation of good. The circumstances around us don’t dictate reality. Our victory has already been secured. Nothing can rob us of who He is, His role in our lives, and His abiding presence.

Key Point: ***The definite will of God is absolute and immovable.***

These two themes reveal the will of the Lord. One is actually going to happen while the other is contingent on His people fulfilling their role. These two definitions of the will of God are actually found in two Greek words in the New Testament. One refers to the definite will of God. This is the will of God that is absolute and immovable. We are required to adjust to it. A great example is the fact that Jesus is going to return to earth. There is nothing you or I can do to alter this event from occurring.

Key Point: ***The desirable will of God can be fulfilled, altered, or delayed through man’s willingness or unwillingness to partner with God.***

The other expression of the will of God is His desirable will. It is related to what the Father wants to happen on earth. However, because man was given a free will, man can alter off the course of what God desires for him. God chooses to follow the order in which He established man’s authority over earth. It was man, who in turn, gave the keys of his authority over to Satan. Through agreement on a personal level, demons gain influence in a person’s life. As corporate humanity comes into agreement with the powers of darkness, which influences beliefs, behaviors and ambitions of people groups, rulers and principalities are established over cities, regions and even nations.

However, when the Son of God became a man and lived in the righteousness prescribed by the holiness of God, he fulfilled the requirements of righteous authority. At His death and resurrection, He took the keys of authority from Satan. Jesus Christ now has all authority and power in heaven and on earth. He in turn gave the keys of authority back to man and reassigned to us the commission we received from the very beginning: Take dominion of the earth, expand and cultivate God’s rule, and fill the earth with those who are in right relationship with God.

¹¹ 2 Peter 3:9

¹² John 12:32

¹³ Romans 12:2

Grace in the Last Days

1 John 3:8 ... the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke 9:51-56 ⁵¹ When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; ⁵² and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. ⁵³ But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶ for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village.

Key Point: *Through Christ's atonement, the devil's claim to hold men slaves to sin was destroyed.*

As the radiance of the Father's glory, the exact representation of His nature, and perfect in the standards of holiness,¹⁴ Jesus did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. In purchasing humanity's redemption through His death and resurrection, He destroyed the works of the devil to hold men captive to the slavery of sin. The motive and attitude of Jesus did not change once He took the throne. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Key Point: *Jesus came to save sinners rather than sentence them to punishment.*

The Old Covenant provided a basis for exposing man's sinful condition and desperate need of salvation. But Jesus came as the answer. Jesus came to save sinners and not to sentence them to punishment because that was the will of Father God. How many storms did Jesus bless as being an act of God while he walked the earth? None! How many sicknesses or diseases did Jesus refuse to heal because they were attributed to a curse or will of God? None! How many cities did He curse for destruction of their rebellion against God? None! When did things revert back to the Old Testament ways after Jesus left the earth? They didn't!

Key Point: *The Judgment Day has yet to come - thus, grace motivated by the goodness of God is still at work in this age.*

Why does God not judge those who do wicked things? The three top illegal businesses in the world include: 1) drug trafficking; 2) arms trafficking; and 3) the trafficking of children into sex slavery. The terror of the cartel and mafia plagues many cities and even nations around the world. The judicial system seems to be breaking down as

¹⁴ Hebrews 1:3

more and more of those who commit crimes are being released back into public. The laws of the land are no longer aimed at bringing justice but rather protecting the guilty while disregarding the victim and the safety of the public. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that wickedness is running rampant in our streets. It's obvious that greed is corrupting many businesses and government officials, and that the majority of the populace is losing their voice in the deluge of corruption surrounding them. So then, are their thugs, gangs, neighborhoods, cities, regions, and even nations that deserve to be punished by the wrath of God? Yes, of course. However, judgment day has not yet come. Until then, man has been given the authority and the responsibility to govern this world rightly.

Key Point: *The law of sowing and reaping is the consequential outcomes of what has been planted through man's choices.*

Within this age of grace we are living in, there is still a law of righteous justice at work in the world. This system of justice is called the law of sowing and reaping. Sowing and reaping is not the same as judgment. Judgment is a decision made by God to either punish or reward people for their actions. It means to choose whether the behavior or motive is worthy of blessing or penalty. Sowing and reaping are the consequential outcomes of what has been planted through man's choices. In this "Age of Grace," God is not making judgments against us, but rather He desires to save us from reaping what wickedness has propagated.

One of the biggest travesties in the world today has to deal with the issue of abortion. In America alone, 50,000,000 babies have been sacrificed because of their inconvenience to their mothers. This has got to have a tremendous consequence upon America. The obvious consequence is the fact that 50 million gifted and godly souls have been removed from being a resource and having a contribution to society. The story of Cain taking the life of his brother Abel reveals how God feels about murder when He said, *"The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to Me from the ground."* In other words, the absence of Abel's call, gift, and purpose in the world is deafening to God. Psalm 127:3 states that children are a gift of *Jehovah* (the expression of goodness) and the fruit of the womb is a reward. What is the consequence of abortion? America has lost 50 million expressions of God's goodness upon the country.

Another consequence is in the area of the spiritual. The apostle Paul revealed that our warfare is not against the physical realm but against principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this age.¹⁵ These principalities, spirits and demons of darkness are empowered and authorized by humanity through their agreement and actions. Thus, when man murders innocent babies, what are they empowering and releasing in the realm of darkness? Is it any wonder then why violence and murder are on the rise in our neighborhoods and cities. What kind of consequences through spiritual forces of darkness are we dealing with due to greed? Perhaps the failure of the economy?

Key Point: *The earth is groaning in pains of travail as it waits for the children of God to come into their glory.*

Why then is there such an increase of devastating earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, and the like? It can't be God's judgment and punishment, this is still the Age of Grace. Jesus called these events as merely the beginning of birth pangs of travail prior to His kingdom being established on earth. In other words, these events are going to increase in intensity and regularity the closer we get to His return. In Romans chapter eight Paul equates the suffering pains of childbirth with creation groaning. But it is birthing something different than just the return of

¹⁵ Ephesians 6:12

Jesus. It is actually under duress in waiting for the children of God to come into their *freedom of glory*.¹⁶ Two dynamic things are happening in creation; the first is that it is in revulsion of the contaminating evil upon it while, secondly, it is also in anxious anticipation of the saints of God coming into their glorious inheritance. The same call that Jesus brought with Him from heaven, and the calling the saints of God bring into this world, is the same drive that the creation of God carries; to destroy the works of the evil one and prepare the way for the kingdom of God. So then, are calamities caused by creation the result of God's curse and judgment upon the earth? No! I believe these are consequences of earth reacting to the evil choices corporate humanity is making.

The Great and Glorious Day vs. the Great and Terrible Day

Key Point: ***The Last Day is recognized as the great and terrible White Throne Judgment Day.***

There seems to be a struggle with making the distinction between the "last days" and the "last day." The "Last Day" is called great and terrible nine times in the bible. This is recognized as the White Throne Judgment Day when the just and righteous Judge Almighty will make choices concerning those who will be punished with the side of evil as Satan and his hosts of fallen angels are cast into eternal fire; and those who will receive the reward of abundant life and an inheritance with His Son, Jesus Christ. This is why it is both great and also terrible.

Acts 2:16-21 ¹⁶ *But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

¹⁷ *'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. ²¹ And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'* (NKJV)

Key Point: ***God pouring out His Spirit on all mankind is the distinguishing attribute of the "last days" (plural).***

What is the significance of the 'Last Days?' God pouring out His Spirit on all mankind. Peter recognized the fulfillment of this prophecy on the Day of Pentecost. Thus, the Day of Pentecost was the beginning of the last days. Later, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit came to the Gentiles and the 'Last Days' blessing became available for all of humanity. The prophecy of Joel includes all types of humanity: "*Your sons and daughters shall prophesy*" – no gender discrepancies; "*Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams*" – no age discrepancies; "*On My menservants and on my maidservants...*" – no status discrepancies. When God poured out His Spirit upon the Gentiles as well, that signified that neither was there any racial discrepancies. In other words, everyone you have prejudice against is welcome to receive God's Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ Romans 8:21

Key Point: ***The “great and awesome day of the Lord” was fulfilled with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.***

The prophecy continues to describe what it will be like before the second part of the prophecy. In other words Joel was prophesying what God was going to do – pour out His spirit on all flesh. Then he prophesied conditions prior to this event. He describes the results of the “great and awesome day of the Lord” with, “... whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” The great and awesome day of the Lord will usher in salvation being made available to man. We, of course, know this happened with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. On that day Jesus was crucified upon the cross, the sun turned dark and Jesus, the reflection of the Glory of the Father, as the moon is a reflection of the sun, turned to blood red. This was not an event pushed to the end of the last days. This has already happened.

Care needs to be taken when correctly interpreting the ‘Day of the Lord.’ Scriptures indicate there are two separate occasions described as the ‘Day of the Lord.’ Like the prophecy of Joel, later used by Peter in Acts, the ‘Day of the Lord’ clearly describes the event in which Jesus bore our punishment and the wrath of God upon Himself in the redemption of man through His death upon the cross. This was a terrible day of judgment for Christ, but awesome and glorious for those of the redeemed. The translation of “the great and awesome day of the Lord” is also translated in other versions of the Bible as; “great and terrible” (King James); “great and dreadful” (New International Version); and “a day to be feared” (Bible in Basic English). The word translated as *awesome* in Joel 2:31 is the Hebrew word *yara*. This word is taken from the “fear of the Lord.” In this day of great and fearful, awestruck reverence of the Lord there again are two responses man makes; to distance themselves from God, or to yield to the draw of the Lord into relationship. (This same instance of the ‘Day of the Lord’ is also supported in Malachi 4:1-5; Zephaniah 1:7-18; & 2:1-3).

Key Point: ***The second reference to the “day of the Lord” is associated with Jesus’ second coming.***

The second instance referred to as the ‘Day of the Lord’ is when Jesus returns to earth at the second coming. Paul describes this event in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2. Peter also addresses the event of Jesus’ second coming in 2 Peter 3:10.

The Scriptures also tell of a great and terrible day that is coming. This is the day of judgment when all of mankind will stand before the great white throne to give an account of their lives. For some, this will be a day of great reward as they are welcomed into their inheritance with Christ Jesus. But for others, this will be great and terrible as they are separated like goats from among the sheep. For them, this will be a day of the wrath of God. These are all described in Isaiah 13:6-9; Joel 1:15; 2:1-11; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 1:15; and Revelation 20:11-15. Until this day comes, we will be in the age of grace known as the Great and Glorious last days.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 *17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

Key Point: ***Reconciliation means that the offense which severed our relationship with Father God has been forgiven.***

In this present age of grace we are all in, the work of Christ Jesus has taken all the punishment of sin and judgment upon Himself at the cross. In the grace of God, mankind is given from the goodness of God an empowering ability to draw close to Him to receive reconciliation. Reconciliation simply means that the offense that once separated us from having a relationship with God had been canceled and our debt requiring justice has been paid in full. There is no longer anything that separates us from the love of God. How does reconciliation work? By *not counting their trespasses against them*.

Key Point: ***The season of grace is identified as God not counting man's sin against Him.***

From the same heart and mindset of the Father's love towards us in expressing mercy, grace and forgiveness, He commissions His saints with the same ministry – the ministry of reconciliation. Just as the Father is not counting their sins against them, so too are we to do so, but offering all sinners a way of cancelling their debt of sin against God through the punishment and judgment of sin Jesus bore upon the cross.

Key Point: ***Until Jesus returns, the people of God are called to the "ministry of reconciliation" – not counting the sins of humanity against them.***

From now on and until the Day of Judgment, the church is called to the ministry of reconciliation – not counting the sins of humanity against them. When the great and terrible day does come, we still do not participate in the judgment. In other words, man is never given the role as judge. We thus, need to take care how we speak and act in a season where the goodness of God is offering grace and mercy rather than punishment.

The Covenant of the Law is still serving its purpose in exposing sin and man's need for salvation. The purpose of the law was simply to expose man's inability to be righteous. But the law has no power for inner transformation where the sinful heart resides. Man's own efforts to be good and change their sinful nature cannot work without God's empowering grace for change. All men are slaves of sin and have fallen short of the requirements we need for being acceptable to God and experiencing relationship with Him. In man's bondage to sin and evil, they needed a deliverer.

The New Covenant of grace deals with the issue of the sinful nature at the level of the spirit and heart. In Christ Jesus we have become a new creation. The old has died with Christ and we have become brand new, born again, children of God. We are no longer sinners. We are now saints – holy and set apart for His glory. Reconciliation is inner transformation.

Romans 5:6-11 ⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Key Point: *God created justice, which satisfies His holy nature through the cross of Christ.*

We were all once in a state of separation from God that sin created. We all deserved punishment and judgment. The world is full of people who are just as lost and separated from God as we were. But we responded to the drawing nature of God and received his gospel (good news) message of reconciliation. God created justice that satisfied His holy nature through the cross so that He could release mercy and grace upon a world of people He loves and yet do not deserve it.

Key Point: *As “salt” and “light” in the world, the ministry of reconciliation looks like preserving humanity and illuminating the love of the Father on earth.*

When God’s people ask questions such as, “How can God not judge men who make evil decisions?” And make comments such as, “If God does not judge San Francisco for her sin of homosexuality, He is going to have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.” Then they don’t understand the power of righteousness in Christ Jesus, nor the age of grace in which we live. Even with Sodom and Gomorrah, their destruction had more to do with the lack of righteous people’s influence among them than their sins. Yes! There are cities in the world that are even worse than San Francisco that deserves judgment. That is why God’s people are called to be salt and light in the world. Salt serves the purpose of preservation while light brings illumination. People don’t just need to see righteousness, peace, joy and hope in the children of light. But they also need intercessors who will stand in the gap of separation between them and God until His light illumines their hearts. Our ministry is not in pointing out the wrong choices people are making. It is pointing them to the author of life through reconciliation. We need a ministry mindset change.

Jesus said that when James and John wanted to call down a curse upon a Samaritan town because of their rejection of Jesus and them, Jesus said they were of the wrong spirit.¹⁷ It was then that Jesus stated His purpose. It is a purpose that has not changed over the last 2,000 years. “...for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” Anything short of this is possibly coming from the wrong spirit.

Key Point: *It is possible to misrepresent the ministry of reconciliation through the wrong spirit and declare judgments and curses.*

The saints of God are called to the ministry of reconciliation. And yet there are those who carry the name of God upon them who continue to prophecy judgment and by their words come into agreement with a wrong spirit that purposes to bring destruction and death. If the saints of God, as His representatives, are given the authority of Christ to do His ministry in the earth, Is it possible to misrepresent His authority and empower the wrong spirit? The Bible teaches that both life and death are in the power of the tongue.¹⁸

The injustices in this world are all around us. One cannot help but be moved with a sense of righteous indignation at the evil that appears to be abounding. However, the nature of God is not only holy, but He is strongly motivated by His goodness and love. If we represent Him only from the standpoint of His holiness, we create a false image of who He truly is. From a false image of God, we can speak a contaminated message that empowers a wrong spirit.

¹⁷ Luke 9:51-56

¹⁸ Proverbs 18:21

The Fear of the Lord Is the Beginning of Wisdom

Psalms 31:19 How great is Your goodness, Which You have stored up for those who fear You, Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You, Before the sons of men!

Key Point: ***The fear of the Lord is the key for tasting God's goodness.***

There are always two sides to a corner. As we have already seen in this lesson, Jesus as the cornerstone established a standard whereby all theology and practice must be in alignment. Thus we said, Jesus Christ is perfect theology. We also looked at the first side of this corner as being the goodness of God. The fact that God is good is demonstrated and modeled by Christ whose purpose was to reconcile all men to God. The other side of the corner is that God is Holy and has to deal with the '*fear of the Lord.*' Both the goodness of God and the fear of the Lord are anchored centrally in the core nature of God's being – God is Love. Love is the primary motivation in all that God does and becomes expressed through the nature of His goodness and also in the nature of His holiness. However, God's nature of holiness is not to create distance between us and Himself, but rather draws us unto Him.

Psalm 31:19 indicates that the fear of the Lord is the key for tasting His goodness. As we are to taste and see that the Lord is good, the blessing connected to His goodness is finding refuge in Him.¹⁹ Or in other words, those who respond in reverent honor and draw close to Him find themselves in the blessing of His covering wings.²⁰

Key Point: ***Wisdom has at its core in the knowledge of the fear of the Lord.***

In both the Psalms – which is the book of worship, and the book of Proverbs – which is the book of wisdom, there is this same statement: "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*"²¹ As the goodness of the Lord manifests in the characteristics of favor, compassion, patience, and kindness. The fear of the Lord manifests in the characteristics of God's wisdom. Knowledge and understanding are the drawing forces of wisdom. These are what lure us in and stir the heart of the seeker to know through experience the manifest presence of God.

Key Point: ***Wisdom responds to the fear of the Lord by choosing to draw near - foolishness chooses to create distance.***

Because of our present understanding of fear, people attempt to downgrade the fear of the Lord by calling it *reverence*. Although the root meaning to the fear of the Lord is honor out of reverence. There is associated with it a terror that causes the righteous to tremble and fall on their faces in God's manifest presence. The fear that the Israelites experienced at the base of the mountain of God was very real and shook them to the very core of their beings. Nevertheless, as with the Israelites, there is a test in the fear. Wisdom desires to draw near. Foolishness creates distance. There is a fear that keeps people from God. Then there is a fear that causes us to draw near, low, and surrendered.

¹⁹ Psalm 34:8

²⁰ Ruth 2:12 (see also Matthew 23:37)

²¹ Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33

Key Point: **Jesus choosing to imitate His Father was in response to the fear of the Lord.**

As Jesus was a representative of the goodness of God, so too then would He have modeled the fear of the Lord. This was evidenced in Jesus' total and utter abandonment to the will of God. He did nothing He did not first see His Father doing and He said nothing He did not first hear His Father say.²²

John 5:19-23, 30 ¹⁹ Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. ²⁰ "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. ²¹ "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.²² "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

³⁰ "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

Key Point: **Jesus' obedience to the Father's will was not motivated by control, but rather love.**

The Father accomplishing His will through Jesus His Son was not through control. Jesus did not respond to the Father's directions as a puppet would to the puppeteer. In His intimate relationship and devotion to the Father out of love, Jesus responded in partnership to what He heard and saw the Father was revealing at a certain time. With every revelation of the Father came empowering grace to duplicate what was being witnessed in heaven on earth. Every word and deed the Father was doing carried a message that revealed His nature, His character, and His kingdom. These revelations bore the testimonies of the kingdom of God that presented a message: God came down, revealed Himself to His people, provided reconciliation through redemption, and is drawing all men unto Himself whereby they could receive abundant living.

John 12:48-50 ⁴⁸ "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. ⁴⁹ "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ "I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

Key Point: **Every revelation of God comes with the responsibility to respond.**

The messages contained within the testimonies of God carried judgment. In other words, they required a decision. Every revelation of God comes with the responsibility to respond. The basic question being asked in everything the Father was saying and doing is, "What are you going to do with the revelation and knowledge you received?" Our response would thus be judged as wisdom or foolishness.

²² John 6:38

2nd Samuel chapter six tells the story of when King David attempted to bring the Ark of God into Jerusalem. There was much celebration with singing, dancing, and joy. The Ark of God was also called the Ark of Testimony because of what it symbolized in its construction and also for what it carried within it. Atop the Ark was the mercy seat, upon which the presence of God would abide. Overshadowing the mercy seat were two cherubim. Under the mercy seat that acted as a lid were what was considered the most precious elements of God's acts of mercy: the tablets of stone upon which were written the ten commandments of God; a jar of manna; and the rod of Aaron that had budded, bloomed, and bore fruit, testifying of God's given authority to his priesthood.

Key Point: *There is a fear associated with the holiness of God that requires humility, honesty, and repentance.*

The Ark of God became so revered that when the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the blood of atonement upon the mercy seat, a rope was tied around him. No one was permitted into the Holy of Holies before the Ark of God except the High Priest, and this was only once a year. Should the High Priest die in God's presence because of un-confessed sin, the only way of getting him out of the Holy of Holies was by pulling him out with that rope. There was a fear associated with the holiness of God that required humility, honesty, and repentance.

David experienced the testimony of God's goodness throughout his early years. Many times he would be playing his music and singing songs of praise and worship of God and experience God's presence and pleasure upon him. He witnessed God's hand of protection against the elements and creatures he would face in the open country. He came to the understanding that although the law required the sacrifice of life and blood, God desired more. He learned that God delighted in the hearts of His people who were surrendered to Him. Thus, when David became king he purposed to bring God's presence into Jerusalem and change the ways of sacrifice to include thanksgiving, praise and worship continually.

Key Point: *The fear of the Lord requires change in our response to His presence.*

In the pursuit of accomplishing his vision of bringing the Ark into Jerusalem, David organizes the event to the best of his ability. It became an extravagant affair that included the participation of the entire city. From a desire to offer God the best, David has the Ark of God placed on a newly constructed cart pulled by oxen. However, what seemed good and excellent to David fell short of God's will. During the journey into the city, the oxen stumbles and caused the cart to shift in such a way that the Ark nearly tumbles to the ground. Uzzah is an innocent servant of David whose ambitions are to please and honor his king. Instinctively he reaches out to steady the tipping Ark of God without regard to his own safety. For Uzzah it was a no win situation created from an oversight by his ambitious leader. Uzzah paid the price for a wrong idea and died. Had Uzzah had known that his actions would cost him his life, would he had responded differently? Probably not! The option was to allow the Ark of God to fall to the ground, loose its mercy seat, and possibly killing thousands of bystanders. Just the lifting of the mercy seat to check the Ark's contents, resulted in 50,700 men loosing their lives. "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" became the question Israel asked.²³

After this tragedy, David stopped the plans and placed the Ark within the home of Obed-edom. Although David still longed for God's presence to come to the city, there was now a fear that kept him from doing so. It was when David witnessed the blessing upon the home of Obed-edom that jealousy for the Lord's presence stirred him to question, "What's wrong?" What's wrong with me? What must I do? What am I doing wrong? What are those who are blessed doing different than I? Are all questions we've asked along our journey into the pursuit for more of

²³ 1 Samuel 6:19-20

God. Witnessing the blessings on others, hearing the testimonies of God's goodness in their lives, all contribute to a righteous jealousy for the greater things of God. Searching for the answers to the questions is what reveals areas of needed change and opens the way for wisdom.

Key Point: *David's first reaction to the Holiness of God was to create distance.*

David's first reaction in the fear of God is what kept God from him for a period of time. He placed the Ark of God's presence outside of Jerusalem at a distance. The second reaction to the fear of the Lord is seen in David's insistence in discovering what was wrong so that he could make the changes and fulfill his dream. God's purpose has always been to rest upon His people. He chooses to partner with His saints who carry His presence. In the presence of God, His goodness manifests in blessings. But there is an alignment of these two corners that are necessary. It is the goodness of God and wisdom in the fear of the Lord that secures a healthy balanced structure.

Key Point: *Response to God's goodness requires the responsibility to maintain the fear of the Lord.*

It was when Israel took for granted God's holy presence and began compromising their behaviors that problems came to the nation. They became complacent, apathetic, and comfortable with having God's presence among them. His presence became common place to them. Falling away from God became a pattern when Israel lost their sense of responsibility to maintain their fear of the Lord.

The Fear of the Lord and To His Goodness

Ephesians 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit;

Key Point: *The value of God's presence is measured by sacrifice - those things we are willing to change which grieve or quench Him from moving.*

The value of God's presence needs to be above anything else of importance. So much so that we are careful to not say or do anything that would grieve Him or divert His will. The nature of the kingdom is so contrary and foreign to what seems natural. In the kingdom, you serve to become a leader. You humble yourself in order to be lifted up. You give that you may receive. And yet in the nature of the kingdom, it is a violation of its culture to manipulate these principles for personal gain. The purpose for giving cannot become motivated by financial blessing. Choosing to serve cannot be the motivation for promotion into leadership. Humbling oneself cannot be motivated by an agenda of being praised and honored by others. Are we seeking an experience with God for the purpose of knowing Him, or so that we can have a testimony to tell others about. Servitude, generosity, thankfulness, and humility are all the attributes of character rather than a concentrated means to an ulterior end. The fear of the Lord will bring to the surface those issues of the heart that are not in alignment with the cornerstone of Jesus' likeness.

Hosea 3:5 *Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days.*

The prophet Hosea brought some very hard words of judgment from God for Israel. God made a decision in heaven that Israel was going to reap the curses which she had been sown by her choices to sin against God and follow the ways of the nations around her. Israel's sins were judged as rebellion in that she chose independence from God. They would thus be handed over to an invading nation for her destruction. Her rebellion created such a distance between her and God that God chose to allow that separation to manifest naturally. Israel would be taken into captivity away from the Promised Land and become slaves in another land. The issue of bondage was a condition of the heart before it became a reality in their lives outwardly.

Key Point: *Separation from the holiness of God resulted in the eventual departure from His goodness*

Separation from the *holiness* of God resulted in separation from the *goodness* of God. But it could not bring separation from the *love* of God. God knew that in separation and distance from Him, Israel would long again for Him and turn to seek Him. Mercy was promised and a call of repentance would one day bring them back home to the Promise Land and right relationship with God. In the last days His people would return to the fear of the Lord and to His goodness.

Conclusion

In the atmosphere of grace, all seeds grow. Heaven contains an environment that is conducive for life, freedom, and fruitfulness. However, heaven on earth is going to create a dynamic where weeds will attempt to compete for the harvest. A religious mindset that is motivated by fear will create an environment of control. In the same way that the laws of God were used to control people's behavior, the religious mindset will set parameters and standards to control people from making poor choices. It uses fear by holding the threat of punishment and banishment to keep poor choices in check. It is like a man who covers his entire yard with rock and cement so that no weeds can grow. It works, but there is no life nor fruitfulness either.

The other extreme is an environment where grace and freedom abound without boundaries. Like a garden that is not cultivated, weeds and vines spread rapidly and end up choking out the good plants resulting in a sparse harvest. Adam's first commission was to cultivate the garden of Eden, which included maintenance and expansion.²⁴

There are two sides to every corner. Jesus, as the chief cornerstone, modeled a lifestyle of living in Honor with the Father while expressing God's goodness in all His words and works. In the environment of heaven coming to earth, grace with freedom being cultivated by the fear of the Lord through wisdom is how earth will become like heaven. The key to life abounding is in drawing unto the Father of love where heart transformation happens.

End of Lesson 302

²⁴ Genesis 2:15

Recommended Resources:

- 1) Audio message: "Revealing God" by Bill Johnson
- 2) Audio message: "Moses: Three Trips Up the Mountain" by Paul Manwaring
- 3) Audio message: "Great and Glorious" by Kris Vallotton
- 4) Audio message: "Revolution of Kindness" by Bill Johnson
- 5) Audio message: "Feeding Alligators" by Bill Johnson
- 6) Book: "What On Earth is Glory" by Paul Manwaring

Copies of these messages can be obtained through:

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Redding, CA 96003
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