

Session 1

December 4, 2022

THE FEAR OF GOD

Psalm 33:6-15; 18-22

Typically, when we hear the word “fear” we think of *fright*. That’s the scary, startling, nail-biting anxiety (or terror!) we might experience in a haunted house or late-night movie theater. That kind of fear can paralyze us on the one hand, or send us running for cover on the other. But unlike our word, the Bible word for fear means *to revere* or *respect*. Whereas fright fills us with dread, Bible fear fills us with awe. In fact, Proverbs 9:10 says, “The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” In this week’s lesson, the psalmist demonstrates three reasons we should fear God...in the *biblical* sense.

We should fear God because He is the God of creation (vv. 6-9). No one but God Himself can express the wonder of creation. There was no natural force at work. Evolution can’t explain it. Science can’t explain it. Only God can. And God did not *thrust* the world into existence, He *spoke* it into existence *ex nihilo* (literally “out of nothing”). Quiet speech brought about the heavens and the “breath of His mouth” brought about the stars (v. 6). There is no “big bang” here. Rather, “God spoke, and it came into being; He commanded, and it came into existence” (v. 9). Notice the progression in the creative design. Verse 6 mentions the big things: the sky and stars. Verse 7 speaks of the oceans. Verse 8 has the earth trembling before Him, and finally mankind is mentioned in the end. We should fear God because the God who made the heavens and the earth and the seas is the same God who made us. For reflection: *Why do you think God’s word emphasizes His creative work so much? What do we learn about God through these descriptions?*

We should fear God because He is the God of the nations (vv. 10-17). God is the God of Israel and the God of the church and the God of all who follow Him. But whether they realize it or not, He is also the God over the nations! In the Old Testament, *the nations* normally refers to gentiles; those who had not then—and do not now—embrace Him. We all know how frustrated we get when God “interferes” with our own personal plans. Well, He does the same thing in governing the world. The word for *frustrates* in verse 10 means to “nullify” or “disallow;” and the word for *thwarts* literally means “to crush.” But whereas God ruins the wisdom and plans of the lost, His own counsel remains standing forever. Notice the contrast the psalmist makes between the lost nations and the people of God (v. 12). His chosen, who submit to His sovereignty, are the blessed ones. Notice also how active God is in sovereignly governing the lost nations: He *looks down*, He *observes*, He *gazes*, He alone *shapes*, He *considers* (vv. 13-15). But while their plans come to nothing, His own people are being blessed. We should fear God because what He does to the “nations,” He can do to us! For reflection: *Verses 16-17 were left out of the focal passage. To what do these verses refer? How does the imagery of these verses add to the psalmist’s argument?*

We should fear God because He is the God of salvation (vv. 18-22). When my Dad would tell me and my brothers, “I’ve got my eye on you,” it was a normally a negative thing! But here (v. 18), it is a very good thing indeed. Those who revere Him, and those who depend upon Him will be delivered when the tough times come (v. 19). The Lord is keeping watch over them. He is

watching over all, of course (v. 13), but He is watching over His own with special favor. The result? His own *wait* for Him, claim Him as their *help* and *shield*, *rejoice* in Him, *trust* in His holy name, and place their *hope* in Him (vv. 20-22). We should fear God because His watchful eye is especially trained on us. For reflection: *Read Zechariah 2:8. What do you think the “apple of God’s eye” means? How might this relate to our passage?*