

The Fear Of God (Part Two)

Our Comprehension of Him

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The previous sermon in this series laid its foundation. The fear of the Lord is of such importance to God's purpose in our lives that it is one of the four planks that form a major part of the direct practical operations of Christianity in our lives. It, along with our faith, hope, and love (or as I paraphrased it, trust, vision or desire, affection, and submission, and a fear that spans the gamut from terror to respectful and loving reverence) forms that foundation of elements that motivate us.

Solomon said that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. It was Isaiah who said that the fear of the Lord is the key to the treasures of God. From that, I would deduce that the fear of the Lord is actually the foundation that lies under faith, hope, and love. It is what leads to those more important attributes.

We also found that it must be learned. It is not in us by nature. Its true beginning is in our calling, because until that time, our conception of God is taught by the precepts of men. It must be taught to us, and the most obvious teacher is God Himself, primarily through His creation at the beginning, that is, His works. But by creation, I do not mean to restrict that term to the physical realm, but also to His spiritual creation—in other words, our experiences with Him in our lives.

I focused on the immensity of the heavenly creation only because I wanted us to catch a tiny bit of the immense capacity of His mind. But we find also that the earth is full of His glory. But that immense capacity is also demonstrated in every area in which He labors. We might say (using an idiom) that He "doesn't miss a trick." Everything is beautifully designed, integrated, and coordinated with everything else. Everything is in order. Everything is planned to the last detail. It is a perfectly functioning system, except where man has altered or destroyed the relationships between plants, animals, and us.

The reason that God points to His works is for our benefit, because the more extensive our comprehension of the greatness of His mind, and of His power, the greater our capacity for reverencing Him. This becomes of great importance if we are going to continue to grow and glorify God by means of our lives.

Allowing the fear of the Lord to stagnate without consciously working toward facilitating its growth is detrimental to the growth of all other facets of Christianity, because it truly is the key to the treasures of God, if indeed it is the foundation for faith, hope and love. And I personally believe that it is. It is not until we can begin to fear Him, respect Him, honor Him, and reverence Him that faith can find an operational use in our lives.

Psalm 8 it shows there could be a subtle trap attached to allowing the fear of God, let us say, to become unbalanced. I do not want any of us to become ensnared in this should any of our thinking be incorrect.

Psalm 8:3-4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you visit him?

We are so insignificant, when compared to the immensity of the universe. I know I found this out one day while jogging. I saw this figure down on the road coming toward me. I usually run or walk fairly early in the morning. As I looked at that person from about a hundred yards' distance, I could not tell whether that person was male or female, or what race the person was. Maybe your eyes would have been better than mine. But what impressed me was how in such a short distance all distinguishing features had disappeared. They had become unimportant.

I fly often. From 30,000 feet you cannot even see people. You can barely see a truck moving on an interstate highway.

If you were to go to the top (to the 9th floor here in the hotel) and look down on the people who are eating in the atrium, let it be impressed on you how small we look even from only 90 feet up. We become insignificant.

Now that same thing is at work with us if we begin to think of the great and awesome power of God, the immensity of the operations that He is controlling. He created all of this and He sustains it, He says, by the word of His power. He upholds all things. How could we possibly believe with all of His importance, brilliance, and intelligence that He could possibly be aware of little old me? ("What is man that You are mindful of him?")

But, that is a wrong thought [attitude], because that is a doubting of His Word. It is in a way a subtle accusation, because He says that He is able to do that. He tells us that we are the "apple of His eye," the focus of His attention. To think otherwise is to doubt what He is able to do.

In addition to that, we find other information that He appears to have a great multitude of angels to whom He has delegated oversight responsibility.

In the book of Acts it says in reference to Peter, "his angel," like he had a personal angel. In fact, the person who was quoted as saying this was the young woman who had gone to the door. She apparently thought that our angels look like we do. How else would she have recognized that it looked like Peter—because it was Peter? She said, "his angel." Was this a common Jewish thought that God included in the Bible, or is it a biblical truth that, indeed, each one of us does have an angel assigned to us? I do not know for sure. I do know, though, that God has assigned one of the archangels, Michael, to watch over Israel. This is definitely stated.

He has undoubtedly delegated responsibility to them, and though they may have a great deal of latitude in authority in dealing with us, I am sure that their communication between them and Him is much better than our communication with one another. They speak a pure language. Maybe they just think it, and do not have to say it. But, they are able to take care of us. We should not doubt that He is able to do what He says.

Let us be reminded by looking at Psalm 139. We are going to read a great deal of this because it is so inspiring to understand. Despite the awesome power of God and despite the fact that His intelligence supersedes anything that we can even begin to think of, He is not like anybody we might compare Him to. He is able to keep track of us.

In Psalm 139 David wrote:

Psalm 139:1-2 O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my downsitting and my uprising. You understand my thought afar off.

How is that for paying attention? Are you not sorry about some of the things you have revealed to Him in your thinking?

Psalm 139:3 You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

Is there anything left out here?

Psalm 139:4 For there is not a word on my tongue but You, O Lord, know it all together.

Boy, there are a lot of things I have said that I had wished I had not said! Let us say we say something against somebody, and we are not aware that they are standing behind us, and they hear all that we said, how do we feel when we realize they heard everything? Well, fear God! He hears every word!

Psalm 139:5-18 For You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain unto it. Where could I go from Your Spirit, or where could I flee Your presence? If I ascend up to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me! If I say, 'surely the darkness shall cover me', even the night shall be light about me. Yes, the darkness hides not from You. The light shines as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike unto You. You have possessed my reins. You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are works and that my soul knows right well. My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of

the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect. And in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God. How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.

Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Now I have gone through these things that point to His power, and His glory as Creator, and His ever-present watchfulness over us—the very pinnacle of His creative efforts, His spiritual creation—because it is the foundation for the right fear of the Lord. It is a mixture of holy terror on the one hand because we recognize that power, and we do not want it unleashed on us. On the other hand, it is a deep, abiding, respectful, loving reverence that is nothing short of awe. It is awe-full that we should be privileged to be allowed into the presence of Character—of love so pure that it defies description. But, it has been given to us! We have to come to grips with it, and we have to learn to deal with it. It is a very important element. It will determine whether or not we grow.

The series will take a bit of a turn here in order to cover another part of this large subject showing why we need to apply ourselves in developing our respect for God. This is going to touch on things that are more operational. Our examples will come largely from the Old Testament. They apply to us in the New Testament because the Old Testament was written for us as well, and we are to learn from it.

I am going to do this by showing you a sequential pattern that takes place quite frequently in the Bible. We see it first in Genesis one through three (which we will not turn to because it is obvious once it is shown).

Here is the sequence:

First, there is disorder. Then, God brings divine order. Then, God reveals His glory, which is followed by judgment in some form.

When I say "disorder," I might use some synonyms as we go through this. Chaos is a term I could use, so could confusion, so could ignorance—they all work hand in glove.

What do we have there in Genesis 1-3? The Bible begins with the chaos brought by the destruction caused by Satan. God brings about divine order through His recreation, including Adam and Eve. Then, He reveals His glory to them, and judgment begins by them being tested in the Garden, and because of their sin, they are cast out of Eden and sentenced to die. That is the general pattern. Fast-forward to the Exodus from Egypt.

Israel is in confusion and chaos in Egypt. God begins to establish divine order through Moses' preaching and His acts to set them free, climaxing with His work at the Red Sea. Then He begins with a further, more spiritual revelation of His glory by giving the law, making a covenant, establishing a tabernacle which He enters in glory, and then the judgments of the wilderness unfold.

In our lifetime, we are approaching a period of extreme chaos, climaxing in the tribulation and the Day of the Lord. Then, God will begin to establish divine order by sending Jesus Christ. He will then reveal Himself somewhat like He did previously with Israel, then the judgment period of the Millennium will begin, and the salvation of Israel will unfold in earnest.

Now, what are important to you and me are the judgments, because it is in that period of time that the fear of the Lord truly becomes operational, and exceedingly valuable.

Exodus 25:8-9 And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall you make it. . .

Exodus 25:40 And look that you make them after their pattern, which was showed you in the mount.

Now that does not seem very threatening, does it?

Hold your place, and go to Hebrews 8. The setting of this chapter is interesting because of what the apostle wrote here after the 7th chapter, all the things that Paul had written up to this period of time:

Hebrews 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum. . .

He is leading up to his main point in this most beautiful of writings. Go down to verse 5:

Hebrews 8:5 . . . Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, 'for see,' says He, 'that you make all things according to the pattern showed to you in the mount.'

Does this have anything to do with our lives?

Well, this is right in the New Covenant! Moses was admonished that he make everything for that tabernacle *exactly*—not one deviation was to be allowed, but had to be made exactly—the way that God showed him to do it. Now I think you understand that that tabernacle was a type of the New Testament church.

Is God going to perfect the New Testament church which He has designed, which He is working on—we have a building not made with hands—is it going to be imperfect, or is it going to be made exactly the way He wants it? Well, believe you me, He has enough power to make sure that it is made exactly the way He wants it! We are going to conform to what He wants out of us, or we will get cast aside.

Now I do not mean to threaten you with this because God is able to finish what He starts. He says that in Philippians 1:6. He has ways—means; processes; resources—to get us to bend to His will. We determine how hard He has to put the pressure on! It works so much better—it so much easier—when we have enough respect for Him to do what He says exactly as He says! That is the key! That shows whether we have the fear of God, whether it is actually operational in our lives.

The fourth commandment says, "the Sabbath." It does not say, "Sunday." He means exactly what He says. He does not change His mind. And as Herbert Armstrong always said, this is the test commandment.

The reason that God insisted upon building exactly according to the pattern is because the tabernacle was going to provide another portion of the divine order necessary before the King's glory would be manifested in it. Think of all the Old Testament types there are in the New Testament. "I will dwell in you." We are the temple of the Holy Spirit now. And so, He is dwelling in flesh, rather than a building made by the hand of man.

Exodus 39:42-43 According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. [Notice what is said about Moses here.] And Moses did look upon all the work, and behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it. And Moses blessed them.

Do you know what I get from that? When Bezalel and Aholiab, and the crew working for them was done with a piece of work for the tabernacle, Aholiab and Bezalel would inspect it. And then they in turn would take each piece and give it to Moses, and Moses would also inspect it before it had final approval to be a part of the tabernacle. That is what it the mediator's job is. That was his responsibility before God. Moses made sure that each piece was done as God said.

We transfer this into the New Testament, and I am sure that Jesus Christ, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the church—His responsibility to the Father toward us is to make sure that we come out the other end the way the Father wants us to come out.

The Father places us in the church as it pleases Him. But, Jesus Christ is responsible, as Moses was, to make sure that the work is carried out just as the Father wants it to be done.

Exodus 40:1-2 And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 'On the first day of the first month shall you set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.'

The tabernacle had to be set up on the exact day that God said. Even this was not left up to chance!

Exodus 40:33-34 And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Their work was accepted.

Let me explain something here: The cloud was not God's glory! The cloud was hiding God's glory! It was shielding the people from Him! And of course, the cloud, I am sure, shone forth with brilliant light, but it was because it was like it had an incandescent lamp burning in the middle of it! The cloud was not God's glory. It hid His glory. The cloud was symbolic, that was all. So it was protecting the people from being slain by an emanation of God's awesome power.

Hebrews 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire!

I Timothy 6:16 who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see, to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

So God dwells in unapproachable light: He is a consuming fire. When Moses was in the presence of God for 40 days and 40 nights, came down out of the mount, there was the reflected glory of God on his face, and it was so bright, and so terrified the Israelites, that he had to put a veil over his face. So even as the veil shielded the Israelites from Moses' face reflecting the glory of God, God clouded Himself in a shield of a cloud.

Now we are going to get a further delineation on this. To Exodus again. This took place after the Golden Calf incident. Moses, I am sure, was shocked at the things that occurred. And he wanted to be reassured about God's willingness to carry on with what He had set out to do: Bringing out the Israelites into the Promised Land. And so in verse 18, we read:

Exodus 33:18-20 And he said, "I beseech thee, show me your glory." [Now notice God's response.] And He said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.' And He said, 'You cannot see my face, for there shall no man see me, and live.'

"Yes God, show me all Your splendor." That is pretty bold! I think that he had to feel very close to God to be able to ask something like that. When God said, "I will show you all My goodness," it carries the connotation with it: "I will withhold nothing." Remember that. When He said, "I will proclaim the name," it was similar to saying, "I will announce My presence."

Can you remember seeing a movie where the king was sitting in judgment and people were coming to him with gifts, or to have an audience and receive judgment from him? Like in the movie "The Ten Commandments" where Charlton Heston was going to come before Yul Brynner and there was a man at the door announcing something like, "Hail to the Chief. . . so and so petitions the king for such and such."

Let us see what God did:

Exodus 34:5-7 And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. And who will be no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.'

What is He implying here by answering Moses the way He did? Well, the lesson to you and me is that His glory is in *what He is* ! It is not what He *looks* like, but it is His *character* ! It is His holiness. It is His righteousness. It is His love. It is His mercy. It is His kindness. That is where His glory resides.

Now, we have to ask ourselves a question: Is the cycle (mentioned earlier) taking place in our lives? Is God revealing [to us] His glory—which consists of what He is, rather than what He looks like—and are we being judged because of this revelation?

We all know the answer to this is "yes," because judgment is now upon the house of God. And God's judgment in terms of eternal life does not begin until He sets things in order and reveals Himself so that we have something to work with. We then can therefore carry out our responsibility in this creative effort, which is to submit to Him and let the Potter do His work.

Let me give you some New Testament answers.

II Corinthians 4:6 [Notice this wording!] For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness. . .

The darkness of what? Ignorance! Was darkness covering the whole earth when it was in chaos following Satan's rebellion? Yes! God caused the light to come into us. It shone out of the darkness of ignorance and the confusion and chaos of our lives.

II Corinthians 4:6 . . . has shined in our hearts [He is beginning to set things in order and reveal Himself to us.] to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Judgment is now on the church of God because that sequence is in action in each individual life of converted people.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

What was Jesus Christ's glory? It was His character! It was the way He lived. It was the way He preached. It was the way He gave Himself for mankind—death on the stake—and rose again as mankind's Savior.

Think of this in a very earthly, carnal, approach, manner, mode: Does not the glory belong to those who accomplish great things?

Here in the St. Louis area, all the glory is going to Mark McGuire. Now he did something that is really noteworthy in the world of baseball. It was a very, very, very difficult accomplishment. I do not know how many of you have tried to hit a three-inch "pill" traveling at 90 miles and hour—and it may be curving—with another three-inch stick. It is pretty hard. To hit 70 home runs in one year is quite an accomplishment. And he is reaping the glory as the result of doing something that nobody else in the history of baseball has done.

The same thing is true for those who have accomplishments in any other area. The glory goes to the ones who have done great things.

Nobody has ever done what Jesus Christ has done!

I do not know how many people have lived on the face of the earth. Sometimes I see demographers say probably 60 or 70 billion people or something like that. But nobody has ever lived a sinless life, except one human being. To Him goes the glory. And except for the Father, the greatest glory and honor goes to Christ.

So we see that some of that glory is reflected in the way that He looks, but we have to get the order correct. That what is most important in God's eyes is what a person *is* , rather than what a person looks like. Maybe we might say that unless a person reflects the character of God, he will never show much glory.

I think that if you will follow this thought through, you will find in I Corinthians 15 that there are going to be people in the resurrection who will show greater glory than others, because that is the intimation there.

Revelation 1:12-17 And I turned to see the voice who spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow. And His eyes were as a flame of fire. And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in his right hand seven stars. And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. And His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, 'Fear not. I am the first and the last.'"

They did not see that kind of glory when He was a human being, yet God recorded that they did see His glory. That which really counted, and that which led to the effulgent glory as very God now.

Revelation 4:9-11 When those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before Him who sit on the throne, and worship Him who lives for ever and ever. And cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created.'

We must remember that we serve the One who is Creator and Savior, and He deserves more reverence, honor, and glory than we could possibly give Him. But we cannot expect to be admitted into His presence with an attitude of disrespect—reciprocity.

We are going to look at some familiar examples of people who disrespected God's instruction, and who were immediately judged.

Let us go back to one we used in the previous sermon.

Leviticus 10:1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not.

They were not following through like Bezalel, Aholiab, and Moses, and those who worked on the tabernacle—who did things exactly as God said. Now we are touching on an example of those who did not do exactly as He said.

"Profane" means "common." It means to show disrespect or contempt for sacred things. It also means irreverent. It is interesting that the Greek word (we have been dealing with a Hebrew word here, that has been translated into profane), used in the New Testament for "profane" meant "far from the temple," which is quite interesting.

If you are profane, you were far from the Temple, and the Temple was the house of God. That meant that you were far from God if you were profane.

Leviticus 10:2-3 And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, 'This is it that the Lord spoke saying, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace."

They treated what was holy as common. Now holy simply means "something that has been set apart for a sacred use." They had treated something that had been set apart as common. And the result of that was an example was set for all time.

I did not get to give the opening night sermon, but I was going to draw on that example in Daniel's time when Belshazzar did virtually the same thing. Nebuchadnezzar had been used by God to conquer the Jewish people, and he had destroyed the Temple, and he brought all the holy vessels back to Babylon with him, and, apparently, he set them away and stored them, and they became part of the treasury of the Babylonian people.

But Belshazzar in a feast in which he was entertaining a thousand of the authorities of Babylon brought those things out—all of those vessels that were in there—and used them for a common, ordinary, everyday "blast!" That is when God gave him the handwriting on the wall. Belshazzar died that night because of treating (I am sure there were other things working there) the holy as common.

God held him responsible because in Daniel's reply to Belshazzar, he said to Belshazzar, because of what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, "You should have known." It was a deliberate act of profanity, breaking the third commandment, making an unholy use of the holy.

Now we can hardly call Belshazzar a converted person. But God held him responsible and Belshazzar was so scared his knees were knocking together—literally!

Leviticus 10:6-7 And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, 'Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest you die, and lest wrath come upon all the people; but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord has kindled. And you shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you.' And they did according to the word of Moses.

Do you know what Moses did here? He cautioned Aaron and his two sons to not even mourn. Do you know why? Lest they give the impression of further disrespect by showing a questioning of God's judgment in seeking pity from God's people. Are you always happy with the way God deals with you? Do you question His attention to you? Do you think that He is unfair? Do you accept His decisions—His judgments—with unquestioning obedience? Do we realize that we are calling into question the greatest Mind that there is? One who is truly infallible? Now I know that we do not intend to do that, but that is the process that is involved here.

I will tell you, Moses understood a thing or two! "Don't you dare even weep because if you weep that will be taken by God as a sign that you don't agree with what He did."

That is pretty stern is it not? How would you feel if it were your two sons who were burned like toast? That is the side of our God that we do not like to deal with! He is showing us a side of Him so that we will understand that this fear of the Lord runs the gamut all the way from sheer terror to a loving, wonderful, reverential awe of Him! It includes the whole gamut because we need the whole gamut because we are so carnal! We do not even understand ourselves very well.

Numbers 20:7-12 And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 'Take the rod, and gather the assembly together, and speak unto the Rock before their eyes, and It shall give forth His water, and you shall bring forth to them water out of the Rock. So you shall give the congregation and their beasts drink.' And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the Rock, and he said unto them, 'Hear now, you rebels! Must we fetch you water out of this Rock?' And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod, he smote the Rock twice, and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron [Immediately the judgment came!], 'Because you believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore, you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.'

Moses did this in a fit of temper. How many of us have temper tantrums? There is no doubt that Moses was exasperated and frustrated by what was going on. But Moses' faith broke down, and with it—here is the danger—went his respect for God, and when his respect for God went down, he disobeyed! Instead of speaking to the rock, he struck the rock not once, but twice! It was the same thing as if he had taken that staff and hit Jesus Christ with it! He is the Rock. To whom much is given, much is required. Moses was quite a man, and he is going to be in God's Kingdom. But God withdrew from him a blessing, I am sure, that Moses very greatly wanted.

Is our God merciful or what, in the way He deals with us? I have got to say, brethren, we must really be weak. Otherwise, He would deal with us more like He did with Moses.

Now tie in the sudden death of Uzza—when he stretched out his hand to steady the ark, it may have been only an involuntary reaction. He saw the thing tipping and he reached out there, maybe to half protect himself—and God struck him dead for questioning God's own ability to protect His own ark as if God could not keep it from falling over and He needed Uzza's help.

Here is another example of swift justice, where there was a disrespect of God's instructions. This example is tied to the last one because it involves the Temple, built to house that ark, and the priest's commission to serve that Temple.

II Chronicles 5:1 Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the Lord was finished. Solomon brought in all the things that David his father had dedicated—the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God

II Chronicles 5:11-14 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course; also the Levites who were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets), it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, that when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying 'For he is good, for His mercy endures for ever,' that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God."

Very similar to the Tabernacle, but now lets go to II Chronicles 36, a while later:

II Chronicles 36:14-17 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem. The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending, because he had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God [prophets], and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore, He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary

II Chronicles 36:20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.

We see a progression through a period of time from Solomon to Josiah and his three sons. That is when this took place when Judah went into captivity. By this time there was a great deal of disrespect for God, little or no honoring of Him by their submission. Now what makes this instruction more sobering, to us anyway, is that these people were a people who had a measure of revelation.

Now I am going to bring this closer to home. We are going to look at something in the New Testament: John the Baptist. John's ministry is somewhat a mystery to us because the Bible really does not say much about it. But, Jesus was very impressed, because Jesus' own testimony was that none greater born from among women has ever lived.

John's ministry followed a long period of spiritual chaos that featured the rise of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Beginning with John the Baptist, divine order was once again going to be restored.

Now it would be wrong to conclude that John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets. No, he was a New Testament prophet. Mark 1:1 says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . ." and then it launches into the ministry of John the Baptist. That was the beginning.

Now in Luke 16, a further confirmation of this. Again Jesus is the speaker. It says:

Luke 16:16 The law and prophets were until John. Since that time, the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it.

Notice, Jesus did not say the law and prophets were until Me. They were until John.

Luke 1:13-17 But the angel said unto him, 'Fear not, Zachariah, your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. You shall have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth, for he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the LORD.'

How many people do you know who have had the Holy Spirit from birth? I wonder how many born of women can that be said of.

I went through this because it gives us an indication that this man's work was going to be exceedingly important, even though God does not give us a great deal of information about it. He prepared the way for Jesus Christ. He had the Holy Spirit from birth.

I am going back to Isaiah 40, and the reason is I want you to see how God is going to begin to set things in order.

Isaiah 40:3-5 "The voice of Him who cries in the wilderness [Here is John's responsibility], 'Prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the desert a highway for our God! [It is going to be a highway that has no twists or turns on it. It is going to be straight and direct.] Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places made level. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it!'

The ministry of John the Baptist was a long time in the planning. A very important sequence in the events is going to be needful for the revelation of God's glory in Jesus Christ.

Now it says that John the Baptist was going to exalt every valley, and flatten every hill, and so forth, but John surely did not take a bulldozer to the hills of Judea and put the dirt from them into the valleys of Judea! But, we do see the glory of the Lord mentioned which indicates that we are going to have divine order established in preparation to revelation and judgment. And these terms, like hills, valleys, and crooked, are in reference to men, their attitudes and their conduct. Things like pride, disrespect, depression, hopelessness, stubbornness, and deceit, among other things, are going to be smashed and leveled off into humility, fear of God, hope, and submission.

Why? There is a spiritual reason why. It is so the foundation can be laid!

You have to level things out before a new foundation can be laid. Only now, the foundation is spiritual. He uses hills, valleys, crooked, and things like this to illustrate that we are going to have to have our character and attitude and conduct leveled out a bit in order to have order established in our lives.

II Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? You are the temple of the Living God. As God has said, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

Now John did his job very well. The ground was prepared for the next step.

Hebrews 3:1-6 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus [That is the subject.] Who was faithful to Him who appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house [That is a comparison.] for this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses [What did Moses do? He built a tabernacle. What is Christ going to do? He is going to build a House—a Tabernacle; a Temple—the ground has been prepared by John the Baptist.] Inasmuch as He who has built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by some man, but He who built all things is God. And Moses truly was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. But Christ as a son over His own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Now Paul called himself a wise master-builder. But Jesus Christ is *the wise Master-builder*. And He builds by means of His Spirit, His Word, His interventions, and His gifts.

Jesus did a much better job that John did, but something interesting happened along the way. Jesus preached to thousands of people during His ministry. Now, I am going to leave you today with a question that I will answer at the beginning of my next sermon.

What strange thing happened along the way to this Man—the greatest Man; the greatest Builder who ever walked the face of the earth—what happened? What amazing turn of events occurred that one would hardly expect to occur to the One who had more glory—deserves more glory—than any person who has ever lived?