

## Fearing God

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### Basics

If you ever open your bible and see the word LORD, that is the modern day translation of the ancient personal name for God. The one represented by the Hebrew letters (Tetragrammaton) YHWH which today is commonly pronounced as “Yahweh” or “Jehovah”.

To the ancient Jews, this name was so sacred that some sources say that before a Jewish scholar wrote it, he had to wash his body. <sup>i</sup> This name mind you occurs about 6,800 times in the Hebrew Old testament<sup>ii</sup> and so that’s the number of times someone would have had to take a bath!

It is on the basis of this Jewish tradition of God’s personal name YHWH being too sacred to utter that the English editions of the bible replace the name with THE LORD.

Things have vastly changed since then in this our generation.

We live in the age of TV and movie superheroes. Loki is a god and so is Thor. Here is *Iron Man* with his side kick supercomputer Jarvis defeating aliens and men alike. There is Professor Xavier in *X men* using his mind to manipulate world events and of course *Black Panther* is emerging from the high technology state of Wakanda.

It would seem that because in our world we imagine ourselves to perhaps be not too unlike our heroes – all powerful, invincible, self-reliant that we have forgotten to fear God – a Holy God and yet in the bible, it was always that when men and heavenly creatures encountered God’s glory – they trembled...they worshiped... they were like dead men.

### Examples from the bible

#### *The Israelites and mountains tremble*

...So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, **so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.** And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, **and the whole mountain quaked violently....**<sup>iii</sup>

*Powerful heavenly creatures can’t even look at God’s glory.*

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: **With two wings they covered their faces,** with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: *“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”*



**At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.**

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”<sup>iv</sup>

*Daniel is like a dead man....*

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

**I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves.** So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; **I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless.** Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. A hand touched me and **set me trembling on my hands and knees.**<sup>v</sup>

It is against this back drop then when you read about Jesus telling his disciples to pray that “Our Father which Art in Heaven...<sup>vi</sup> this was a RADICAL new teaching. You see the disciples were Jewish and as I have described above, they knew about the holiness of God. Here was Jesus asking them to address God as a Father – the God who had made their ancestors tremble!

This is why our generation needs to see that being able to call upon God – the same God whose face the powerful Heavenly creatures (Seraphim) can’t behold is not something to be cheapened – but a privilege. We are to approach him, with love – but also with Awe (fear and wonder and amazement).

It is perhaps for this reason that the writer of Proverbs appropriately started off thus:

“The fear of the LORD **is the foundation of true knowledge...**”<sup>vii</sup>

## Today’s perspective

So how should we in our generation Fear God – and yet also be able to boldly approach the throne of our Gracious God...to help us when we need it most? <sup>viii</sup> Two examples will suffice:

1. **In prayer.** We start our prayers in the same style Jesus taught us – by recognising God’s Holiness – thus we worship him, we praise him in our prayers.

I often begin my prayers by declaring who He is, for example:

*Holy, Holy Holy. Heaven and Earth are full of your Glory. Oh Lord my God, May your name be glorified in My life.*

2. **In Giving (money, time, talent).** We recognise that it is God who enables us to have wealth – so we act as stewards of his wealth. In fact he boldly declares:

*I have no need of a bull from your stall  
or of goats from your pens,  
for every animal of the forest is mine,  
and the cattle on a thousand hills.  
I know every bird in the mountains  
and the insects in the fields are mine.*

*If I were hungry I would not tell you  
for the world is mine, and all that is in it.<sup>ix</sup>*

Having come to the conclusion that I am here for only a short while – I manage my financial affairs, my time and my relationships – as a steward. They after all belong to God. I can't be stingy for example – why not bless others with HIS MONEY. The one he has so generously LENT ME. HE DOESN'T NEED MY OFFERTORY. I NEED HIM. I am lucky to be blessed by him.

In this generation of ours where all is about “me” – individualism, have you considered that perhaps you don't even own what you think is yours? Your strength, your brain/wisdom, your beauty, your temperament, the air you breathe – everything is a gift to you and a temporary one at that, from the Ancient of Daysx. The Great I AM xi– the one who extends to you mercy, so you can lovingly call him Father - Abba, Daddyxii.

#### Related starter content

Reading the bible  
Praying  
Fasting  
Giving

## Your turn

What will you now do differently? Examples to think about include:

- *Obedience* – How will you respond to the bible's teaching's knowing the Powerful God we serve?
- *Song (Praise and worship)* – How will your own praise and worship change knowing who you are singing to?

Write here

## Notes

<sup>i</sup> <http://helpmewithbiblestudy.org/5Bible/TransALookJewishScribalCustoms.aspx#sthash.hkbwl6Tz.dpbs>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names\\_of\\_God\\_in\\_Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God_in_Judaism)

<sup>iii</sup> Exodus 19:16-19 (NIV)

<sup>iv</sup> Isaiah 6: 1- 5 (NIV)

<sup>v</sup> Daniel 10: 4- 10. Note to the Reader. This description by Daniel seems to fit a similar one of Jesus in revelation 1: 10- 18.

<sup>vi</sup> Matthew 6: 9 (KJV)

<sup>vii</sup> Proverbs 1: 7 (NLT)

<sup>viii</sup> Hebrews 4:16 (NLT)

<sup>ix</sup> Psalms 50: 9 – 12 (NIV)

<sup>x</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/ancient-of-days.html>

<sup>xi</sup> Exodus 3: 14

<sup>xii</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Abba-Father.html>