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DO YOU REALLY HAVE 'THE FEAR OF GOD'?

The Feast of Tabernacles has always been a highlight in the year for the people of God. It is a time of spiritual rejuvenation. It is a time of concentrated teaching and instruction. But what is actually the MAIN purpose of the Feast? Do you know?

Since God is the One who instituted this Feast, we need to look to Him for instruction in this regard. And God tells us very clearly.

And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithes of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; THAT THOU MAYEST LEARN TO FEAR THE LORD THY GOD ALWAYS.
(Deuteronomy 14:23)

Why does God instruct us to observe the Feast? To enjoy the blessings we have received? Yes, but that is not the main reason. The main reason God gives is that He wants us to LEARN to fear Him ALWAYS!

The word here translated as "always" is the Hebrew word "yom" and it is most commonly translated as "DAY". This verse tells us that we are to learn to fear God "every single day of our lives". That means in every circumstance of life. Whatever we are doing, the fear of God must be a part of it.

So how about it? Do YOU fear God? How do you know that you fear God? Exactly WHAT is the fear of God? And HOW do we learn it? Is there a counterfeit to the fear of God? What are the ways of identifying the fear of God? How is a lack of the fear of God identified?

THE FEAR OF GOD IS IMPORTANT

When God started to deal with the nation of Israel, He explained to the people what it was that He expected from them. Notice ...

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but TO FEAR THE LORD THY GOD, TO WALK in all his ways, and TO LOVE him, and TO SERVE the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, (Deuteronomy 10:12)

The very first thing that God expects is that people will "FEAR" Him. The fear of God is an attitude on which a lifestyle of love and obedience to God must be built.

King Solomon summed it up as follows:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: for this [is] the whole [duty] of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

The fear of God is the foundation of obedience from the heart to God. That is "the whole duty of man". And if we have that right attitude, then God takes pleasure in us.

The LORD taketh pleasure IN THEM THAT FEAR HIM, in those that hope in his mercy. (Psalm 147:11)

In the Book of Isaiah God again describes the attitude He is looking for in us human beings.

For all those [things] hath mine hand made, and all those [things] have been, saith the LORD: but to this [man] will I look, [even] TO [HIM THAT is] poor and of a contrite spirit, and TREMBLETH AT MY WORD. (Isaiah 66:2)

The fear of God involves "trembling". Did you know that? And do you have this? Do YOU tremble? If you don't, then perhaps you don't really have the fear of God?

EXAMPLES OF THE FEAR OF GOD

There are many examples of the fear of God. It was something that all the faithful servants of God had in common. For example ...

NOAH had the fear of God. It was the fear of God that motivated him to build the ark (Hebrews 11:7).

ABRAHAM had the fear of God. This was the specific point that God tested Abraham on when He instructed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. After Abraham had shown his willingness to obey, God told him ...

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: FOR NOW I KNOW THAT THOU FEAREST GOD, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only [son] from me. (Genesis 22:12)

DAVID had the fear of God. When David had the opportunity to kill King Saul, it was the fear of God that kept David from doing so. Notice the account where David came upon the sleeping Saul.

THE LORD FORBID that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that [is] at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. (1 Samuel 26:11)

JESUS CHRIST was the greatest example of the fear of God. This is mentioned by Paul in the Book of Hebrews.

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, AND WAS HEARD IN THAT HE FEARED; (Hebrews 5:7)

Jesus Christ was heard because He feared GOD!

Faith and the fear of God always go together. You cannot have one without the other. People who lack faith will also automatically lack the fear of God.

A LACK OF THE FEAR OF GOD

There are also many examples of people who lacked the fear of God. Without going into details, we might think of people like King Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16); and King Ahab (1 Kings 18:17) who blamed Elijah for a penalty from God; and Balaam (Numbers chapter 22) who wanted to go just as far as God would allow him to go; and Cain who killed his brother Abel.

Let's take a closer look at the example of Cain, because there is something here we can learn. The account starts off with God correcting Cain.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee [shall be] his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. (Genesis 4:6-7)

In spite of this direct correction from God Himself, Cain very clearly lacked the fear of God. He went ahead and killed his brother Abel ...

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. (Genesis 4:8)

Now notice something: Cain starts off with a lack of the fear of God. This leads him into sin. But as soon as he has sinned, IMMEDIATELY he has a fear, the fear of the penalty his sin has incurred. Notice:

And Cain said unto the LORD, MY PUNISHMENT [IS] GREATER THAN I CAN BEAR. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, [that] EVERY ONE THAT FINDETH ME SHALL SLAY ME. (Genesis 4:13-14)

The fear he now has causes him to exaggerate. The punishment, on the physical human level, was NOT greater than he could cope with. WHY should he assume that every one else was also going to be prepared to kill? The point is that Cain's lack of the fear of God had been replaced by a spirit of fear of the penalty for his action.

Notice something that David explained in Psalm 36:1.

To the chief Musician, [A Psalm] of David the servant of the LORD. THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE WICKED SAITH WITHIN MY HEART, [THAT THERE IS] NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE HIS EYES. (Psalms 36:1)

This is very important for us to understand! When David looked at the sinful actions of the wicked, he was able to draw a conclusion. And that conclusion is this:

EVERY SINGLE ACT OF SIN SAYS THAT THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD PRESENT!

Solomon expressed the same thought in slightly different words in Ecclesiastes chapter 8.

But it shall not be well with THE WICKED, neither shall he prolong [his] days, [which are] as a shadow; BECAUSE HE FEARETH NOT BEFORE GOD. (Ecclesiastes 8:13)

Sins are only committed in the absence of the fear of God. Can you understand why God tells us to learn to fear Him at the Feast of Tabernacles? It is so that we stop sinning against God.

Now the true fear of God is like a big red flag ... it stands out a mile! The real fear of God in an individual becomes obvious VERY QUICKLY ... and so also does a lack of the fear of God. You don't think it is that obvious? To God it is like a big, bold banner that is openly displayed.

Thou hast given A BANNER to THEM THAT FEAR THEE, THAT IT MAY BE DISPLAYED because of the truth. Selah. (Psalms 60:4)

Not only does God readily identify this fear; but those people who have the fear of God will very quickly recognize it in other people. There are many tell-tale signs that identify this fear. They act like the banner that "displays" the fear of God.

THE PROCESS OF SINNING EXPLAINED

There are always a number of steps in the process of sinning. Satan was the first one who ever sinned. So let's look at his example first.

When Satan was created by God, he was perfect in every way except in the area of character ... that can only be produced over a period of time by correctly responding to different situations. Satan was wise and perfect in beauty (Ezekiel 28:12). He was obedient to God and God gave him the responsibility of being at the very throne of God (Ezekiel 28:14). This means that at that time Satan had the fear of God.

THEN he lost the fear of God and sinned. He lost the fear of falling ... and therefore he fell!

HOW ART THOU FALLEN from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! [how] art thou cut down to the ground, WHICH DIDST WEAKEN THE NATIONS! (Isaiah 14:12)

["Lucifer" is an incorrect translation of the Hebrew word "heylel". The Hebrew word really describes Satan's boastful manner. This is explained in another article.]

Satan fell! He was thrown down to this Earth "like lightning". But notice something else that this verse tells us.

Satan "weakens" nations and individuals. The Hebrew verb here translated as "didst weaken" is "chalash". In Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament this verb is defined as "to prostrate, to vanquish". The word "vanquish" means "to subdue completely".

So HOW does Satan subdue nations? How does he subdue us? Do you know?

WHEN WE LOSE THE FEAR OF GOD, THEN WE HAVE BEEN MADE WEAK! WHEN WE LOSE THE FEAR OF GOD, THEN WE HAVE BEEN SUBDUED!

As soon as we lose the fear of God, we are ALREADY heading for the lake of fire. We may not know it; we may not recognize the road we are travelling, but that is the destination we are heading for. And even if we ourselves don't know it, Satan surely does!

So let's notice how Satan weakened and subdued the first human beings.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, YEA, HATH GOD SAID, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (Genesis 3:1)

Satan starts off with a lie, which is characteristic for him (John 8:44). Eve knew this was false and so she corrected the facts.

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which [is] in the midst of the garden, God hath said, YE SHALL NOT EAT OF IT, neither shall ye touch it, LEST YE DIE. (Genesis 3:2-3)

Notice something very important. Up to this point Eve still had the fear to disobey God. She had the fear of God. She believed that God meant what He had said. She also feared the consequence of sin ... the death penalty.

So understand this: exactly what is Satan's purpose when he confronts us with a lie, as he did Eve? His purpose is to TEST US FOR THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF THE FEAR OF GOD. Those who don't have the fear of God will go along with the lie. Satan then knows that with those people that don't accept the lie he has more work to do to get them to sin.

Keep this point in mind; I will come back to it later. When we go along with a lie, it PROVES to God that we do not fear Him.

So back to Eve: she had the fear of God. She feared the penalty God had pronounced. So notice Satan's tactic.

And the serpent said unto the woman, YE SHALL NOT SURELY DIE: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:4-5)

What is Satan's aim and goal here? His goal is TO DESTROY THE FEAR OF GOD! He does this by claiming that they will not have to pay the penalty God pronounced. "You will not have to die ...".

The result?

AND WHEN THE WOMAN SAW that the tree [was] good for food, and that it [was] pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make [one] wise, SHE TOOK of the fruit thereof, AND DID EAT, and gave also unto her husband with her; AND HE DID EAT. (Genesis 3:6)

Satan succeeded. The fear of God in BOTH of them had been destroyed. They took their eyes off the penalty for sin. The consequence of the loss of the fear of God was that they sinned.

It is INEVITABLE that people, who do not have the fear of God, will sin. It is impossible for someone who does not have the fear of God to not sin.

ALWAYS BEWARE of people who want to destroy your fear of the consequences of wrong actions. They are Satan's messengers to you. Never be fooled or put off guard by people like that. Satan has

used that tactic ever since deceiving Eve.

Understand something else!

You always thought the battle with Satan is that he wants to get you to sin, right? That's actually only the second phase of the battle with Satan. The REAL battle, the first phase of the fight, is Satan's effort to get us to lose the fear of God. And he doesn't attempt to persuade us to lose that fear in every area of our lives all at once. He is far more subtle than that. He is very content to persuade us to lose the fear of God IN JUST ONE SMALL AREA OF OUR LIVES! One area at a time is all he focuses on. Don't be fooled!

Now back again to Adam and Eve.

Let's now look at the immediate results of sinning. This is important to understand, because this is ALWAYS the immediate consequence when we sin. Notice:

AND THE EYES OF THEM BOTH WERE OPENED, and they knew that they [were] naked; AND THEY SEWED FIG LEAVES together, and made themselves aprons. (Genesis 3:7)

Exactly WHAT were their eyes "opened to"? Their eyes were opened to Satan's way of thinking! IMMEDIATELY their eyes (i.e. their minds) were opened to A SPIRIT OF FEAR! Why did they sew fig leaves together? Because of a sense of modesty? NO! There were no other human beings around. Were they "embarrassed" that the animals around them might see their nakedness? NO! So why did they make these "aprons"?

They made these coverings because they felt VULNERABLE! They had an irrational fear! There was no one who could have hurt them in any way, but they were afraid. The spirit of fear had entered their minds. It had nothing at all to do with "modesty". That is a concept which God only introduced later when He, God, clothed them. It had nothing to do with Satan supposedly telling them that sex is shameful and evil. Satan didn't ever again directly tell them anything else! At least not in audible words!

They felt vulnerable and insecure and they were afraid. In the next verse this fear is demonstrated as follows:

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: AND ADAM AND HIS WIFE HID THEMSELVES from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8)

Their fear showed itself in their attempt to "hide" from God. This is what Adam then also admits when confronted by God:

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, AND I WAS AFRAID, BECAUSE I [WAS] NAKED; and I hid myself. (Genesis 3:10)

This statement by Adam is only partially true. It is true that he was afraid. But the reason for his fear was not because he was naked. The real cause of his fear was because he had sinned! Sin ALWAYS produces fear.

Understand this:

God is not the One who gives people "the spirit of fear" (see 2 Timothy 1:7). The spirit of fear is in fact the spirit of Satan.

With Adam and Eve we see that the fear of penalties had entered their minds. There is no sign of remorse or an apology or a real confession to God. Instead, there is an attempt to hide and to cover up their guilt. But no real remorse.

We can now summarize the whole process as follows:

- 1) There must always be some "fear" in every person's life.
- 2) God intended for it to be "the fear of God".
- 3) This type of fear actually inspires confidence, boldness and courage. It gives a sense of security.
- 4) It is always Satan's first goal to destroy this fear of God.
- 5) If Satan can destroy this fear, then he knows that it is inevitable that people will sin.
- 6) Therefore always beware of people who want to destroy your fear of the consequences of wrong actions.
- 7) If the fear of God is destroyed, it is automatically replaced by the spirit of Satan, which is a spirit of fear.
- 8) This is a fear of the penalties we have incurred by our wrong actions. There is no remorse, only a frustration with the inevitability of these penalties.
- 9) The more sins we commit, the more fears we are going to have. The spirit of fear will become entrenched in our minds.
- 10) The ultimate stage in this process is a resigned fearful acceptance of the inevitability of the lake of fire.

For IF WE SIN WILFULLY after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But A CERTAIN FEARFUL LOOKING FOR OF JUDGMENT AND FIERY INDIGNATION, which shall devour the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26-27)

11) With the unpardonable sin, the right fear of God has been rooted out and destroyed so thoroughly and so completely, and it has been replaced so completely by the wrong fear of deserved penalties, that remorse is no longer possible. There is simply no way to rekindle the true fear of God in such a mind. This attitude will typically manifest itself in a resigned-type-of-approach to the consequences of the sins that are being committed. An outward air of bravado cannot hide the inward "FEARFUL looking for of judgment and fiery indignation".

THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

During the last 10 to 15 years of his life Mr. Armstrong repeatedly went back to speaking about "the two

trees". As time passed, he would keep on refining his explanation of the events that occurred in the Garden in Eden and their significance. As his understanding grew, so he modified little details here and there in his explanation.

Now, almost 10 years after Mr. Armstrong's death, we should understand this possibly even a little more clearly than when Mr. Armstrong died. Mr. Armstrong himself would no doubt have continued to refine his explanation.

So let's look at this subject once again.

Both trees were real trees with real fruits on them. What the fruits looked like is really not important. The importance was in THE EFFORT that Adam and Eve would put forth to eat either one of these particular fruits. The eating of the fruit of either tree required a conscious decision on their part.

Both trees symbolized something. The tree of life symbolized ACCESS to eternal life. If they had taken of this tree, they would have been given ACCESS to God's Holy Spirit. This access was eventually opened up by Jesus Christ, the second "Adam". It would have put Adam and Eve into the same position true Christians are in today ... still sinning at times, but having access to forgiveness upon genuine repentance. And having access to God's Holy Spirit, the down-payment of eternal life.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented ACCESS to Satan's way of thinking. God placed both of these trees in the midst of the garden (Genesis 2:9). This tree is called the tree of the "KNOWLEDGE OF ...". Knowledge is in the mind. Knowledge has to do with thinking. Now when God created everything physical, there was nothing "evil" about it. God tells us that "EVERYTHING that He had made ... was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Therefore the knowledge of "evil" was not going to come from God. Furthermore, of and by themselves physical things may be "good", but they cannot be "evil". The term "evil" is a judgmental term; something becomes "evil" by THE WAY it is used.

Both trees were trees of knowledge. The tree of life represented THE KNOWLEDGE of how to live successfully, based on the fear of God, based on submission and obedience to God. It was the tree of the knowledge of good. The tree of the knowledge of good AND evil introduced an additional element into the equation. It opened up Satan's way of thinking to mankind, i.e. the knowledge of evil. The knowledge of evil is totally Satan's domain. Satan's way of thinking (i.e. the knowledge of evil) represented a competition to God's way of thinking, the knowledge of good. It offered another perspective on everything in life.

That is what Satan always offers us: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE!

When Adam and Eve decided to take of that tree, they in effect accepted that they (and all mankind after them) would always start out with that perspective in life, that mankind would be on Satan's wavelength. That access to Satan's way of thinking was established and it has been spontaneous and automatic ever since. Access to the other way of thinking (i.e. thinking good to the exclusion of evil) was barred by God. Until Christ's first coming God only opened up His way to a few selected individuals; basically those who are named and also indirectly referred to in Hebrews chapter 11. At Christ's first coming access to the tree of life was opened on a slightly larger scale, but still only by a specific calling from God the Father Himself (John 6:44). At the second coming of Christ access to the tree of life will be opened up fully to all mankind.

So when Adam and Eve took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they accepted that the truth of God relating to every area of life (i.e. the knowledge of good) would be challenged and confronted and discredited on every front by the thinking of Satan (i.e. the knowledge of evil). It meant that they themselves would have to judge for every area of life whether God's way or Satan's way was better.

Without guidance from God what they might think of as "good" might in fact be "evil" (i.e. Satan's way). Without guidance from God they would in many cases not distinguish the good from the evil until it was too late ... until they had already committed themselves to the wrong way. They had opted for the hard way of learning to distinguish good from evil. That way we call "learning by experience".

Over the next approximately 1500 years almost all people chose the knowledge of evil alone; they rejected any semblance of good along with the evil. As God said at Noah's time.

And GOD saw that THE WICKEDNESS of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] ONLY EVIL continually. (Genesis 6:5)

In this verse the two words "wickedness" and "evil" are a translation of the one same Hebrew word. It is the same word that was first used in the expression "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". God saw that the evil of man was great. God saw that man wasn't living by "good AND evil"; he was living by ONLY EVIL and totally rejecting anything that might have been termed "good".

Because of this extreme that man had sunk to, God brought the flood upon the Earth. Living by "ONLY evil" was more than God was prepared to accept. After the flood God said to Noah.

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; FOR THE IMAGINATION OF MAN'S HEART [IS] EVIL FROM HIS YOUTH; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. (Genesis 8:21)

This verse is vitally important to understand. It holds the key to the understanding Mr. Armstrong was searching for and which he correctly deduced without, as far as I can recall, reference to this verse.

The Hebrew translated as "from his youth" means "from his early life". In other words, as Mr. Armstrong concluded in the late 60's, man is not born with a hostility to God. Human nature is not evil at birth. But it is very early in life that this hostility is injected into the human mind, certainly before age one year. The imagination of man's heart is not evil from birth, but only from "very early in life".

This is what God plainly tells us in this verse.

Next, the way in which God offers this explanation indicates that this is not the way that God had hoped or intended it would go. God had expected man to live by the knowledge of evil AND at least some good, but mankind completely dropped "the good". With this statement God is indicating that He is prepared to continue to work with mankind towards the fulfillment of His plan, even though, on the whole, mankind was more evil than God had anticipated.

When God created man, He did not think of the utter depth of depravity that humanity would sink to, even though God knew in advance that human beings would sin, whether sooner or later. But God had not thought about the sins that man would indulge in. God does not think about sins. Such thinking is foreign to God.

Notice in Jeremiah:

They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire [for] burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake [it], NEITHER CAME [IT] INTO MY MIND: (Jeremiah

19:5)

And they built the high places of Baal, which [are] in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through [the fire] unto Molech; which I commanded them not, NEITHER CAME IT INTO MY MIND, THAT THEY SHOULD DO THIS ABOMINATION, to cause Judah to sin. (Jeremiah 32:35)

In Genesis 8:21 God is indicating that He would not again bring universal destruction upon man, even though man's integrity and morality was lower than God had expected.

And this whole process was set in motion when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. So now let's go back to Adam and Eve and their "fig leaves".

When they ate that fruit, it opened their minds to Satan's way of thinking. It opened their minds to Satan's spirit of fear. It opened their minds to Satan's wrong attitudes.

There is no indication that Satan said so much as one more word to Adam and Eve after his statement in Genesis 3:5. God had NOT given Satan permission to actually "speak" to them so they could have some ongoing conversation. It was for the explicit purpose of presenting his temptation to them that God allowed Satan this way of manifesting himself to them. Once Satan had achieved his goal, that permission from God expired and it has NEVER since then been renewed, with the possible exception of Satan's three temptations of Jesus Christ. Satan does not have the power to manifest himself so that we physical beings can see him or physically hear him. When people are influenced or possessed, they may have visions or hear voices in their own heads; things that people around them will not see or hear.

Understand that before Adam and Eve sinned, Satan was NOT allowed to broadcast his attitudes to them. There was no "broadcast" from Satan to humanity prior to them eating the forbidden fruit. When they ate that fruit, they in effect signed Satan's broadcasting licence for the next 6000 years. But prior to sinning, Adam and Eve were not subject to unidentified thought impulses from Satan. The only way God was going to permit Satan access to them was for Satan to approach them in some visible form. This was so that their chances would be somewhat better. You always stand a better chance when you can see your opponent.

The immediate attitude Satan injected into their minds was that of fear. Wrong attitudes about sex and about everything else came later, each one at an appropriate time. Their covering themselves with "fig leaves" was a manifestation of their spirit of fear, as Adam made very clear when he spoke to God. Nowhere in Genesis chapter 3 does the subject of "sex" enter the discussion. In fact, it is only after these events that sex is actually mentioned and that Eve then conceives (Genesis 4:1). Furthermore, covering themselves with fig leaves does not imply a WRONG attitude towards sex. Once they had sinned, they were so filled with feelings of guilt and fear, that any thinking about "sex" was extremely improbable.

Understand that once Adam and Eve had sinned, there was nothing more to be gained, as far as Satan was concerned, by talking to them. Satan had to WAIT and see how God would respond to the sin of these human beings. Satan didn't know what God would do next. He didn't know whether God would actually allow these human beings to get as far as ever having a sexual relationship and founding a human society. Or whether God would just blot them out and do something else? WE TODAY KNOW that when Adam and Eve sinned, God the Father and Jesus Christ decided that Jesus Christ would give His life to pay the penalty that their sins (and the sins of all people since then) had incurred. This is what is meant when we are told that it was decided at the foundation of human society (i.e. "the world", Greek "kosmos") that Jesus Christ would "be slain".

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. (Revelation 13:8)

But Satan didn't know this is how God would respond to the sins of Adam and Eve. He had to wait and see. He had no idea how God had planned ahead and prepared for this eventuality. The concept of a member of the God Family voluntarily giving His life as a sacrifice would never have crossed Satan's mind. That option would never even have occurred to Satan. Satan only thinks selfishly.

THE WHOLE PROCESS OF SINNING SUMMARIZED

This whole process of sinning is summarized for us in the New Testament by James.

LET NO MAN SAY when he is tempted, I AM TEMPTED OF GOD: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: (James 1:13)

Temptation never originates with God. God will never tempt anyone to break His holy laws. So now James explains:

But every man is tempted, when he is DRAWN AWAY of his own lust, and enticed. (James 1:14)

The verb here translated as "drawn away" is "exelkomenos", the present passive participle of "exelko". In Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon this is defined as: "to draw out, to lure forth; a metaphor taken from hunting and fishing; also used of the seductions of a harlot".

In literal terms this word refers to being dragged away from a point of origin. So do we understand what James is telling us?

In tempting us, it is Satan's goal to drag us away from a point of origin! That point of origin is the fear of God. To achieve this "dragging away", Satan uses our "own lusts". They are the bait to lure us away from the fear of God. It is only AFTER we are drawn away from the fear of God, that we are actually "enticed". From then on there is no stopping the process.

Then when lust hath conceived, IT BRINGETH FORTH SIN: and sin, when it is finished, BRINGETH FORTH DEATH. (James 1:15)

These consequences are inevitable. They are just as certain as water flowing downhill. If the first step is taken, then the others always follow. They followed for Satan; they followed for Adam and Eve; and they also follow today in our lives. The wage for sin is "death"; the same wage it has always been on the human level.

The only way to really stop the process of sinning is to stop the first step. Resist the temptation to lose the fear of God! Rekindle the fear of God in those areas of our lives where we have lost it. We just "MAY" not have too many more chances to do so. At the Feast God wants us to LEARN the fear of God.

WHAT IS THE FEAR OF GOD?

Now that we have seen the vital role the fear of God plays in preventing the process of sinning, let's be sure we understand what this fear is.

The fear of God is:

- complete respect and reverence for God (Psalm 89:7)
- trembling at the thought of disobeying God (Isaiah 66:2)
- standing in awe of God's power and authority (Psalm 33:8)
- a finely tuned conscience towards obeying God
- a strong desire to please God from the heart (1 John 3:22)
- a motivation for changing wrong ways of living
- a bold confidence in the promises of God (Psalm 115:11)
- a prerequisite for God's protection (Psalm 34:7)
- the beginning of real wisdom (Psalm 111:10)
- clean and enduring (Psalm 19:9)

The fear of God is NOT a lack of faith in God. It is NOT a spirit of fear and insecurity. It is NOT a fear of penalties, while at the same time disagreeing with the laws, the breaking of which incurs these penalties. That is only Satan's counterfeit for the fear of God. That is the fear the demons have, as James tells us.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: THE DEVILS ALSO BELIEVE, AND TREMBLE. (James 2:19)

They have the wrong fear. They disagree with God's laws, but they tremble at the thought of the eternal penalty they have incurred. This is the wrong kind of trembling.

THE COUNTERFEIT FEAR

We have already seen the wrong fear that Satan and the demons have. And Satan inspires this same wrong fear in people. It is a very selfish and perverted fear. Outwardly such people often exhibit a sense of bravado, an image of being really tough. It is the fear that Jesus Christ typified with the words "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (e.g. Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13; Matthew 24:51; etc.). For example:

- the smoker who scoffs when he is warned about the dangers of lung cancer;
- the homosexual who fears getting AIDS but still continues with his perversion;
- the thief who fears getting caught but continues to steal;
- the adulterer who fears that his family will break up when he is finally exposed, but continues with his adultery;
- the murderer who knows that he will get caught sooner or later, but continues his life of crime.

We know there is a penalty for all of these things. And we fear that penalty. But the apparent possibility

of getting away without "maybe" paying the penalty excites us and draws us away from the fear of God. Then, when the penalty comes, we feel sorry for ourselves. We feel that the penalty is "more than we can bear". THE ONLY REASON why we now have a certain amount of regret is because we are now suffering. There is no genuine sorrow towards God for having sinned!

This is the wrong kind of fear. It is a fear that paralyses into inactivity. It does not produce any changes for the better.

HOW DO WE GET THE FEAR OF GOD?

For a start, this is not something we have naturally or are born with. As God said about Israel:

O THAT THERE WERE SUCH AN HEART IN THEM, THAT THEY WOULD FEAR ME, AND KEEP ALL MY COMMANDMENTS ALWAYS, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! (Deuteronomy 5:29)

We do not automatically have the right fear of God. Therefore it follows that we must be taught how to fear God.

Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I WILL TEACH YOU THE FEAR OF THE LORD. (Psalms 34:11)

Yes, we have to be taught. And God intended that the Feast of Tabernacles would be one of the main times in the year when we focus on learning how to fear God. Now let's ask ourselves this question:

"When we return home after a Feast of Tabernacles, HOW CAN WE KNOW whether we have in fact learned to fear God?"

If after the Feast we are able to say: "Boy, we really had some inspiring sermons this year", would that mean that we have learned to fear God? Maybe, but not necessarily. If we come home and genuinely feel: "that was really the best Feast ever" ... would THAT prove that we have learned the fear of God? Maybe, but also not necessarily.

There is really only one way to know whether we have learned to fear God at the Feast. And that one way is this: IF we come home, determined to make some changes for the better in our lives, THEN we have learned the fear of God to some degree or other! Let me put it quite plainly:

AN INCREASE IN THE FEAR OF GOD IS EVIDENCED BY A DETERMINATION TO MAKE SOME CHANGES FOR THE BETTER IN OUR LIVES!

That is also how GOD knows that we have learned to fear Him. If we return from the Feast without having determined, IN SOME WAY, to make some changes, we may have had a terrific Feast ... but we have not learned any additional fear of God. We will still have the same level of the fear of God that we had before that particular Feast. And if we are deeply converted, the fear of God that we already had before the Feast may be very considerable; but we will not have learnt any ADDITIONAL fear of God. Whenever we experience an increase in the level of the fear of God that we have, it is evidenced by positive changes that we make.

The fear of God is not just something in our heads! It (or the lack of it) is constantly manifested in every action and activity of our lives. EVERYTHING we do reflects the presence or absence of the fear of God.

AN EXAMPLE OF CONTRASTS

Sometimes the most effective way to explain something is to present it contrasted to its opposite. One of the parables Jesus Christ gave presents us with such a contrast. It is the parable of the talents in Matthew chapter 25. The story focuses on just three different servants.

And UNTO ONE HE GAVE FIVE TALENTS, TO ANOTHER TWO, AND TO ANOTHER ONE; to every man according to his several ability; and straightaway took his journey. (Matthew 25:15)

The three servants received different amounts of money: five talents, two talents and one talent. Now understand that all three servants "feared", but in different ways. The right fear of God MOTIVATED the first two into positive action.

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made [them] other five talents. And likewise he that [had received] two, he also gained other two. (Matthew 25:16-17)

The third servant, however, had a different type of fear. He had the fear that paralyses into inactivity. He did nothing!

But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. (Matthew 25:18)

This third servant did have a fear, as he later admits; but it was not the fear of God. It was Satan's counterfeit. As this servant said:

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I KNEW THEE THAT THOU ART AN HARD MAN, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: AND I WAS AFRAID, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, [there] thou hast [that is] thine. (Matthew 25:24-25)

He had the type of fear that will end up in the lake of fire! He was "FEARFUL"! It was based on a totally wrong concept of God. God is NOT "a hard man" and God has NEVER been "hard"! This man's view of God is actually an insult to God. The man implied that God is neither fair nor just and that God is motivated by a selfish "GET-attitude". There is no room in the Family of God for people with this kind of attitude towards God.

The man had the spirit of fear from Satan and he totally lacked the fear of God.

So now you know what the fear of God is. But how can you know whether you really have this fear? Maybe you would just like to think that you have it? Is there a way to know for sure?

Yes, there is a way!

When we have a headache, that is usually not a sickness in itself. The headache is only A SYMPTOM

that something is wrong somewhere. Some symptoms, like a headache, are common to many, many sicknesses. Other symptoms, like chickenpox blisters, are very specific. In other cases again, symptoms appear in groups and then the cause can be identified.

You may be able to identify sicknesses, like mumps and measles, by examining the symptoms. But can you also identify a lack of the fear of God?

THE SYMPTOMS OF A LACK OF THE FEAR OF GOD

You may be surprised to realize that a lack of the fear of God can be identified by literally HUNDREDS of different symptoms. That's right, I said hundreds! In the remainder of this article I will now focus on many of these symptoms. Once I have done that, you should be able to continue the process yourself.

Are we ready to honestly and openly face the facts? Satan has deceived many of us very subtly. Never forget that his highest priority is to destroy the fear of God in our lives. If he can do that, then he knows from personal experience that it is inevitable that we will sin.

Satan knows that he cannot destroy our fear of God in one gigantic onslaught. We are just always going to have some restraints in some areas of our lives. So he has opted for trying to eliminate our fear of God in one small, tiny area of our lives after another. If he keeps up a never-ending barrage of attacks, he knows that most of us will give in at least in SOME areas, and some of us may give in in quite a lot of areas?

It is easier for Satan to get people to lose the fear of taking a piece of fruit from someone else's tree (now where have I read something about that before?) than it is to get them to lose the fear of committing murder. Now of all those people who have definite strong restraints against committing murder: how many would think it is not a big deal to take some fruit from another person's tree? To some people this may be "a non-issue". But it certainly wasn't a non-issue to God roughly 6000 years ago.

Just a brief word of explanation: MY PURPOSE in this section is not to point a finger at anyone. I do not have a "holier-than-thou" attitude on these matters. It is a fact that we only see what we look for. I have come to understand these things because I have been "looking" for this understanding. My purpose is to enable you to also see these many areas of our everyday lives.

Many of us may already see all these areas? If so, that is just fine. I believe that God wants all of us to understand this subject, on which Satan has surely clouded our minds to some degree. What each one of us DOES with this understanding is between us and God.

So let's get specific.

1) Do we feel guilty before God when we haven't prayed for more than 5 minutes for the day? If we don't feel guilty, we probably lack the fear of God to some degree.

2) Do we feel guilty before God when we haven't studied the Bible for quite some time? If we don't feel guilty, we also probably lack the fear of God to some degree.

3) Assuming we are in fairly good health: do we feel guilty if we haven't fasted for more than 1 day in the last 6 months? If we don't feel guilty

4) If we are not tithing faithfully, do we feel guilty before God? If not

5) Do we keep the Sabbath faithfully, as explained in Isaiah 58:13 ... not doing our own ways, or finding

our own pleasure or speaking our own words? Can we talk on just about anything with people on the Sabbath without ever feeling guilty that maybe our topic is not appropriate for the Sabbath?

6) Does it bother our conscience to watch TV sport or entertainment on the Sabbath, after we have read Isaiah chapter 58? If it doesn't ...

7) Does it bother our conscience to do "very minor" business on the Sabbath, perhaps minor shopping or trading ... when we can read Nehemiah 13:15-21, where we find God's servant Nehemiah referring to Sabbath-shopping as "AN EVIL THING" (verse 17)? If we can read those verses and then shopping on the Sabbath still doesn't bother our consciences, then perhaps we lack the fear of God to some degree?

8) If we do have an income (quite a number of people don't really have one!) and we don't actually budget in some way for the three annual Feast offerings, do we feel guilty before God? If we don't feel guilty, perhaps we lack the right fear of God?

WHY do we do all these things (pray, study, fast, tithe, plan for offerings, keep the Sabbath and Holy Days, etc.)? Is it because we have come to understand that God has revealed in the Bible that these are His laws for human conduct, that doing these things is pleasing in His sight and leads to blessings, that not doing these things reaps automatic penalties? Is it because we understand that KNOWINGLY not doing these things reaps greater penalties from God?

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not [himself], neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with MANY [STRIPES]. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with FEW [STRIPES]. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:47-48)

9) Do we fear to lose our temper? People who lose their temper, lack the fear of God. When Moses lost his temper and struck the rock instead of speaking to it, he at that point in time lacked the fear of God; and for that God punished him by not allowing him to cross over into the Promised Land. If we don't fear to lose control over our emotions, we may lack the fear of God to some degree, as we certainly would never dare to lose our temper if God Almighty was visibly standing next to us at that very moment.

10) Our approach to delevaning our homes for the Days of Unleavened Bread shows whether we fear God or not. We should certainly not be fanatical, but are we conscientiously meticulous or is it just a superficial ritual that we try to get done with as quickly as possible? How we delevan our homes shows God something about us.

11) Boasting and showing off: every boast is a huge placard that says "I don't have the fear of God". Do we remember James' admonition to those who proudly pronounced their plans for the future?

Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what [shall be] on the morrow. For what [is] your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. FOR THAT YE [OUGHT] TO SAY, IF THE LORD WILL, we shall live, and do this, or that. (James 4:13-15)

Is the attitude of "God willing, I would like to do or intend to do this or that" always a part of our thinking? If it isn't, then we may lack the fear of God.

12) When we are on a team or the supporters of a team: do we fear to sing songs that boldly profess how we are going to win and whip the opposition? You know, the type of thing that many enthusiastic sports supporters engage in? If we do these things, we don't really fear God. What if we knew that God is supporting the other team ... would we still sing those songs?

13) Hairlength can reveal a lack of the fear of God. A man who has long hair and a woman who has unduly short hair (obviously barring health problems) both reveal a lack of the fear of God. Paul explained this in 1. Corinthians chapter 11. In the eyes of God it is a shame for a man to have long hair (verse 14). Every man who lets his hair grow long says, in effect: "I don't really care what you think about this, God. I will do what I like."

14) Modesty: dressing immodestly in order to attract the opposite sex shows a lack of the fear of God. Peter talked about the meek and quiet spirit that should be the ornament of converted women (see 1 Peter 3:1-6).

15) The world's entertainment: are we quite happy to watch other people breaking God's laws in the movies and on TV? Would God be happy with the things we find entertaining? Do we have the fear of God in this area of our lives?

16) Makeup for women: do we really believe that this is pleasing in the eyes of God? Would we still feel the same if we read Mr. Armstrong's very strong article in the WN of November 16, 1981? Since nothing was ever presented to disprove Mr. Armstrong's teaching on this subject, do we really feel that people who approve of makeup have the fear of God?

17) We do have a responsibility to glorify God by the way we look after the body He has given us. As Paul wrote:

For ye are bought with a price: THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

Do we really conscientiously look after the body God has given us? Or do we just let ourselves go? God's way of glorifying Him through how we look after our bodies is from the inside out ... applying the laws of health to the best of our ability. Satan's counterfeit of looking after our bodies is to disguise the outside with makeup, to hide what is inside. Makeup is a form of deception ... what is presented is not real; it is only painted on! Makeup epitomizes deception. If we do not make the effort to glorify God through our bodies GOD'S WAY, then we probably lack the fear of God to some degree.

18) The attitude towards wanting the things we want also shows whether or not we fear God. For example, one man who really wanted approval for something told me: "Well, I don't believe the Bible makes a case against what I want. So therefore, as far as I am concerned, it is okay." Is that how someone who has the fear of God seeks to diligently establish the will of God ... by seeing whether or not the Bible doesn't make a specific case AGAINST something? And anything that God doesn't SPECIFICALLY FORBID must therefore be okay? This attitude lacks the fear of God!

19) Arguing against the Bible shows a lack of the fear of God. People who desperately want to prove that the Bible doesn't really mean what it says in plain terms, lack the fear of God.

20) People who engage in vulgar speech doesn't really fear God.

21) Music is a powerful influence in our lives. Satan knows this. Many of our most popular songs have lyrics that speak about breaking God's laws. Mostly they talk about sexual attraction to someone other

than one's lawful spouse. Do we fear to sing words which we know do not convey a message that God would fully approve of? Do we fear to sing some of the Protestant songs in the Church's new hymnal, where we know the wording is not correct in the sight of God? If we knowingly sing words that are not fully correct before God, then we lack the fear of God.

22) Junkfoods! We all know they cause health problems. We know God tells us not to eat the visible animal fat and we also know it causes heart disease. But do we eat it anyway? Sugar consumption very likely causes more health problems than does tobacco, though the health problems are of a different nature. Our dental problems are almost totally due to the consumption of refined sugar. Do we still consume refined sugar as a regular part of your diet? We also know that many food additives are carcinogenic. Do we have a "I couldn't care less" attitude about the additives that are added to the foods you consume? We know quite well that drinking too much coffee is not good for us. What some of us may not be aware of is that since the late 1970's it has been known that the consumption of methylxanthines (a term for chemicals found in coffee, tea, cola and chocolate) causes the development of breast lumps in women and that total exclusion of these chemicals from the diet will often achieve a total remission in cases of non-malignant lumps in the case of women under the age of 40 years.

It is not a matter of becoming fanatical about "white bread" and "white sugar" and "food additives", etc.. We are part of a world that has rejected God and so we are also exposed to some degree to the penalties this rejection brings with it. It is inevitable that all of us will have to consume foods that are to some measure polluted. Also at times it will probably involve the eating of some "junk foods". Sadly, for many people today junk foods are the only things they have access to.

The point is this: since it is unavoidable that we are going to sometimes eat and drink some things that are not good for us, are we going to make a real effort TO MINIMIZE such occasions ... or would we rather not be told which of the things we eat and drink that are not good for us? Do we take responsibility for the things we consume?

The motivation: "I will avoid junk foods because I want to be healthy" is fine. But an even better motivation is: "I will avoid junk foods because God Almighty, who gave me this body, requires me to conscientiously look after it. It is God who does not want me to pollute this body. THEREFORE I will be very careful about what I eat. I know that in the process I will be healthier and I am glad for that, but my main motivation is to please God."

If we don't have this attitude, then perhaps we also lack the fear of God to some degree?

23) Do we fear to hold a grudge against someone who has offended us? People who hold grudges don't really fear God. What if God would hold a grudge against us, because we have sinned against Him? Do we understand that God will not forgive our sins if we hold a grudge against anyone else?

24) Dirty jokes! Do we laugh at dirty jokes? If we do, you don't really fear God. Do we really think God would laugh at a dirty joke?

25) Joking about people who have handicaps or who are in some way disadvantaged. Do we think such jokes are funny? If we do, we certainly don't fear God, who is their Defender!

26) Do we indulge in day-dreaming, which is mostly a synonym for coveting? Society encourages such day-dreaming. It is the theme of many of our popular songs. Do we realize that God does not want us to "day-dream"?

27) Child-rearing! Do we fear to not correct our children when they are disobedient? If we don't correct them in some way when they need correction, we don't fear God.

28) Lusting! How we react when we are exposed to pornography or sexually-explicit novels shows whether or not we fear God. Satan tempts us to lust. Since this involves no outward actions, it is easier to destroy the fear of God in this area of our lives and then to get us to lust.

29) When a law of God is a little vague: do we judge in our favour or in God's favour? Do we reason: "As long as God doesn't say that I cannot do, I will do something ..." or do we reason: "As long as God does not say that I can do it, I won't do it"? Which way do we reason? How we reason when the application of one of God's laws is a little vague reveals whether we fear God or not.

30) Personal pronouns for God! Back in the 60's in all of the Church's publications pronouns referring to God the Father and to Jesus Christ were always started with a capital letter. This was intended to convey respect for God! Then during the 80'ies this was changed to writing the pronouns with a small letter. It was justified by the statement that this was the "accepted norm" in literary circles. And that is quite true. But the point is: do we have to follow the world?

If you check Mr. Armstrong's writings, even when he quoted a partial verse, where in the KJV the pronoun for God was written with a small letter, Mr. Armstrong would quote it with a capital letter. Mr. Armstrong's motivation for this was the fear of God. But other people seem to have lost that fear?

Can we understand why God wants us to be TAUGHT the fear of God?

31) Pride! This is a give-away symptom of a lack of the fear of God. The proverbs on this subject are too numerous to mention.

32) We are taking part in some sporting event or other and we have the opportunity to cheat. If we do go ahead and cheat, then we don't fear the God who can see that we are cheating. This principle also applies to ANY form of cheating.

33) Fornication and adultery are evidence of a lack of the fear of God.

34) Alright, it is pretty clear that adultery is wrong. But what about just a little "flirting"? Married people who engage in flirting also lack the fear of God. We should remember what Christ said about just "looking on a woman ..." (see Matthew 5:28).

35) When we miss that easy putt on the golf course, when we play tennis and hit an easy shot into the net, when we play soccer and miss an easy shot at goal, when the referee gives an unfair call against us ... do we shout out in anger and frustration, as many of our modern sporting heroes do? If we do, then we lack the fear of God.

36) How we dress for Church services shows whether we fear God or not. Over the years MANY people have evidenced a lack of the fear of God in this regard. For the actual Church service we are requesting the privilege to be in the presence of God, whose spirit presence we request in the opening prayer. A casual and sloppy appearance reflects a lack of respect for God.

37) How do we respond to correction? Do we bristle with anger and resentment, or do we fear to reject it? How we respond to correction shows God whether we fear Him or not.

38) How we respond to praise also reveals whether we fear God or not. Does it go to our heads? Do we get to feel that we are important, really good or great in some way?

39) How do we respond when adversity strikes? Do we examine ourselves or do we feel we are getting an unfair deal? While Job was justifying himself to his three friends, he did not really fear God. For Job

the right fear of God only came later.

40) Whenever we are faced with a decision that we need to make: what criteria come to our minds? Is it the thought: "What would God want me to do under these circumstances?" ... or is it the thought: "What is the best thing for me?" The God who can read every thought and intent of our hearts (Hebrews 4:12) learns from our thoughts whether or not we fear Him.

41) Medical drugs! When we are told that drug "X" will solve our immediate health problem, do we bother to check out if this drug has any side effects, like causing kidney or liver damage (quite common)? And if the small print does indeed reveal that there are serious potential dangers with this drug, do we ask ourselves whether God would want us to take such chances? When we ask God to heal us, can we see that the fear of God may motivate people to avoid risking serious known side effects?

42) Gambling! Any form of gambling shows a lack of the fear of God. The casting of lots was a solemn appeal for divine guidance and intervention. Gambling shows a lack of respect for God's power.

43) Smoking is also an indication of a lack of the fear of God. Every smoker knows that smoking destroys the body.

44) People who show contempt for the penalties that wrong actions incur also lack the fear of God. As Solomon wrote:

A prudent [man] foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.
(Proverbs 22:3)

That contempt for the potential penalty is a form of pride. Very often once the penalty is meted out, then we don't like it.

45) Hypocrisy is another symptom of a lack of the fear of God.

46) Willingly believing a lie! I am not referring to being genuinely deceived by someone. Here I am referring to willingly believing a lie, because that is what we WANT to believe. Willingly turning away from the truth because we want permission to do something that God really forbids. As Paul wrote ...

And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:4)

47) Our God-ordained roles within the family. For a husband to abrogate his leadership position (barring total incompetence) within the family is an expression of a lack of the fear of God. Similarly, a wife who attempts to take over the leadership role in the family is showing that she does not fear God. And children who do not submit to the authority of their parents, show that they lack the fear of God. Right relationships within the family structure show a fear of God.

48) There is a modern "enlightened" trend for nudity between parents and children. But notice this instruction:

The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she [is] thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. (Leviticus 18:7)

Now certainly, the main thrust of this instruction is against incestuous relationships. But that does not negate the literal meaning at face value. Children are not to look upon the nakedness of their parents.

The Book of Genesis covers over 2000 years of history. During those 2000 years literally MILLIONS of different incidents between people took place. Only a very few of them are recorded for us. You are familiar with the account of Noah getting drunk at some time after the flood.

Now WHY is it recorded that Ham "SAW the nakedness of his father"? After all, Ham was then already around 100 years old. Notice.

And HAM, the father of Canaan, SAW THE NAKEDNESS OF HIS FATHER, and told his two brethren without. (Genesis 9:22)

And WHY did Shem and Japheth, two men who were also around 100 years old, take such meticulous care to NOT look upon the nakedness of their father?

And SHEM AND JAPHETH took a garment, and laid [it] upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and THEIR FACES [WERE] BACKWARD, AND THEY SAW NOT THEIR FATHER'S NAKEDNESS. (Genesis 9:23)

By our standards they were already old men. And yet they made a very specific point to not look at their father's nakedness. And why is this specific incident recorded? WHY record for all human history that these two old men were so meticulous in not looking upon their father's nakedness? How would Moses have known that the faces of Shem and Japheth "were backwards" during this incident, except that God revealed this to him? It is not as if Shem or Japheth had recorded this incident in their "memoirs" and Moses just copied it from there, right?

This wording in Genesis 9:23 can only be led back to direct inspiration from God, as 2 Timothy 3:16 also states. This means that God Himself wanted it recorded that Shem and Japheth were very careful not to look on their father's nakedness, that "their faces were backward" during this incident.

A casual, careless attitude about being naked in the presence of our children is evidence of a lack of the fear of God.

49) Condoning and showing approval for evil. It is not our responsibility to correct the people of this world (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). But neither should we actively, or even tacitly, convey approval of the wrongs they commit. Notice God's indictment:

Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied [him]? WHEN YE SAY, EVERY ONE THAT DOETH EVIL [IS] GOOD IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD, AND HE DELIGHTETH IN THEM; or, Where [is] the God of judgment? (Malachi 2:17)

When we convey approval for wrong speech or wrong conduct, then we have the fear of men and we lack the fear of God.

Well, that gives us many different areas in which the fear of God, or the lack of it, becomes evident in our lives. So how did we do? Did we find SOME areas in our lives where we can perhaps improve in having the right fear of God?

WE ALL LACK THE FEAR OF GOD IN SOME WAYS

When we are presented with a list like this, sooner or later there will be some points that make us feel uncomfortable or guilty. At times like that our defence mechanisms usually tell us: "just who does he think he is anyway?" If we can somehow criticize the people who show us our sins (see Isaiah 58:1), then we feel we can also dismiss the things they have shown us.

But that misses the point!

The people who show us our faults are NEVER perfect themselves. And there is no reason why they would have to be perfect before they could show us things that are true about us.

Yes, Moses lost his temper and at that moment also lost the fear of God in a certain respect. But God continued to use Moses anyway. The prophet Elijah was subject to exactly the same "passions" (i.e. feelings and emotions) that we are subject to (James 5:17); he was even scared for his life when a woman, Jezebel, threatened him (1 Kings 19:3); yet God worked through him. Mr. Armstrong was not perfect either, but God used Mr. Armstrong to teach and to instruct us in many things.

In presenting the above list I do not mean to say or to imply that I myself have the fear of God perfectly. Like everyone else, I too fall short and lack the fear of God in certain situations. I too have to make changes and learn to have more of the right fear of God.

I know full well that I do not have the fear of God perfectly!

Some of the areas I have listed apply to me more than other areas. Other areas again may apply more to you? It is not a matter of pointing a finger at people. Not at all. My intention has not been to make people feel guilty or feel bad. My intention has been to open our eyes to Satan's subtlety. We need to see what David pointed out so pointedly in the Psalms:

... that EVERY transgression of the wicked is an expression of a lack of the fear of God!

The fear of God affects every single area of our lives; not only WHAT we think, but also HOW we think. It affects everything we say and everything we do. Its presence or absence in our lives is evident to God probably dozens of times every day. Sometimes it is tested in major ways. For the rest of the time it is expressed in our handling of everyday situations.

So how do we learn the fear of God at the Feast of Tabernacles? Well, many of these areas could be expanded into a feast message or into part of a feast message. If we then go home and are determined to change for the better in that one area of our lives, THEN we have "learned" some more fear of God. We have come to understand God's mind in another area of our lives more fully and we make a determined effort to apply that new knowledge in our lives (in some cases it may only involve changing THE WAY we think). That application expresses growth in the fear of God. As we learn to understand God's ways in another area of life, we "tremble" at the thought of not applying this added understanding. More understanding always brings greater accountability.

So have a happy and meaningful Feast of Tabernacles and PLAN to ... "learn to fear the LORD your God always".

Frank W. Nelte