

REASONS TO FEAR GOD

Found in 67 passages (79 verses) from our list.

There are many reasons to fear God; and some people might be surprised to learn that the majority of those reasons have nothing to do with being judged by him! Those who think that fear of God exists only because of judgment have a very distorted, truncated concept of fear.

Before sin entered the world, fear was still the proper response to God. But there was no need for the punishment aspect that people tend to think about. It is only after we, the human race, rebelled and joined the side of the evil one, that judgment came to have the "negative" characteristics we tend to associate with it. Before that, any judgment that would have occurred would have only resulted in blessings! Even now, though we tend to think of judgment as a punishment against evil, there is still the aspect of blessings for those who choose to follow God.

The context of a verse will determine the nature of the fear that is mentioned. Some passages focus on the type of fear that Scripture commands us to have; others focus on the fear that people will experience when they *don't* have the proper "fear of God." A few of the passages have a greater focus on the "fear of judgment" (though it may be related to the fear of God).

Since the concept of "fear" can be translated several ways (including words such as "afraid" and "reverence"), it is put in italics, where present in the verses listed below.

1. WHO GOD IS - being aware of God and his character.

a. Because of his greatness - great in many ways.

Job 37:23-24 - The Almighty is beyond our reach, exalted in power; with justice and righteousness, not oppressing... therefore, men *revere* him.

Daniel 6:26 - People must *fear* and tremble before the God of Daniel. He is the living God; he endures forever; his kingdom will never be destroyed; his rule will never end.

Malachi 1:14 - "I am a great King," says the Lord Almighty. "My name is (to be) *feared* among the nations."

Rev. 15:4 - Who will not *fear* you, O Lord, ... for you alone are holy.

b. Because we owe it to God.

Jeremiah 10:7 - Who should not *fear* you, O King of the nations? This is what we owe you! ... There is no one like you!

c. Reactions of people who found themselves in God's presence.

Genesis 28:17 - Jacob was *afraid* ... "This place is the house of God, the gate of heaven."

Exodus 3:6 - God said, "I am the God of your father/Abraham/Isaac/Jacob." Moses hid his face, because he was *afraid* to look at God.

Acts 7:32 - (God spoke to Moses from the burning bush.) Moses shook with *fear* and dared not look at him.

2. God's POWER and MIGHT.

- a. The unchangeable nature of what God does.
Eccles. 3:14 - Everything God does will remain forever; people can't add to it or subtract from it. God does this so that people will *fear* him.
- b. Displayed in creation.
Psalm 33:8-9 - Let all the peoples of the earth *fear* the Lord; ... for he spoke, and all creation came to be.
Psalm 65:8 - Those living at the ends of the earth *fear* your wonders [referring to God's works in creation].
Jeremiah 5:22 - Should you not *fear* me and tremble in my presence? [... because of his works in creation - v. 22 - 24]
- c. Displayed in miraculous events.
Joshua 4:23-24 - The Lord your God dried up the Jordan ... so that you might always *fear* the Lord your God.
Jonah 1:15-16 - They threw Jonah overboard, and the sea grew calm. Seeing this, the men greatly *feared* the Lord.
Acts 19:17 (see v. 11-20) - (God was working miracles through Paul, and some Jews tried to imitate him. The demon acknowledged Jesus and Paul, but overpowered and beat the Jews so terribly, that they fled naked and bleeding.) Those who heard about this were seized with *fear*, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored.
- d. The power and might that surrounds his presence.
Exodus 20:18, 20 - The people saw the thunder/lightning/smoke and heard the trumpet; they trembled with *fear*. Moses' explanation of why God did it: God is testing you, so that the *fear* of God will be with you.
Hebrews 12:21 - The sight (of the mountain covered with fire, darkness, gloom and storm) was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling and *afraid*."

3. Awareness of God's WORD or message (the Bible).

- a. Hearing God speak audibly (Israel at Mt. Sinai).
Deut. 4:10 - God said, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to *fear* me as long as they live in the land ..."
- b. Being taught / learning God's Word.
Deut. 6:1-2 - (Being taught God's laws/decrees...) so that you, your children and grandchildren (etc.) may *fear* the Lord your God as long as you live.
Deut. 17:19 - The law is to be with him (= any future king). He must read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to *fear* the Lord his God.
Deut. 31:12-13 - Assemble the people so they can listen (to the law) and learn to *fear* the Lord your God. Their children must hear it and learn to *fear* the Lord your God.

- c. The warning of judgment (and other facts from God's Word).
 - Amos 3:8 - The lion has roared! Who will not *fear*? The Sovereign Lord has spoken!
Who can keep from prophesying? (In this case, it was a message of judgment.)
 - Acts 24:25 - Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come.
Felix was *terrified* (and sent Paul away). [This was the wrong type of fear.
Sadly, he did not repent and turn to God.]

4. God's BLESSINGS.

- a. Past and present blessings.
 - 1 Samuel 12:24 - *Fear* the Lord ... consider what great things he has done for you.
- b. Future blessings.
 - Hebrews 12:28 - Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and (in doing this) worship God in an acceptable way, with *reverence* and awe.
 - Psalms 102:15 - All the nations will *fear* the name of the Lord and (will *fear*) his glory.
The Lord will have compassion on Zion (Jerusalem) and rebuild it, and will appear in his glory.
- c. Promises - made and kept.
 - Malachi 2:5 - The covenant I gave him (Levi) was one of life and peace. This called for *reverence*. He *revered* Me, and stood in awe of My name.
 - Psalms 119:38 - Fulfill your promise to me your servant, so that you may be *feared*.
- d. Forgiveness.
 - Psalms 130:4 - With you there is forgiveness; so that you will be *feared*.
- e. Prayers - heard and answered.
 - 1 Kings 8:40 - (When your people repent and pray, answer them) ... so that they will *fear* you all the time they live in the land.
 - 1 Kings 8:43 - (When a foreigner prays to you) ... hear/answer, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and *fear* you.
 - 2 Chron. 6:31 - (When your people repent and pray, answer them) ... so that they will *fear* you and walk in your ways.
 - 2 Chron. 6:33 - (When a foreigner prays to you) ... hear/answer, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and *fear* you.
- f. Our celebration of God's blessings can encourage us to fear God.
 - Deut. 14:23 - Eat the tithe of your (crops, herds, etc.) in the Lord's presence (at the place he will choose), so that you may learn to *fear* the Lord your God always.
- g. Our praise to God - may result in others fearing him.
 - Psalms 40:3 - ... a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and *fear* (and trust God)...
 - Psalms 67:5-7 - May the peoples praise you, O God... our God will bless us... and all the ends of the earth will *fear* him.

5. The effects of MORAL CHARACTER on fear of God.

- a. The result of pursuing (and attaining) wisdom.
Proverbs 2:5 - (If you search for wisdom, etc.) ... you will understand the *fear* of the Lord.
Proverbs 14:16 - A wise man *fears* [the Lord].
- b. The result of walking upright (morally).
Proverbs 14:2 - He who walks in uprightness *fears* the Lord.
- c. The result of an undivided, focused heart (which is a gift from God).
Psalm 86:11 - Teach me your way, O Lord, ... focus my heart and I will *fear* your name.
Jeremiah 32:39 - I will give them an undivided heart and purpose, so that they will always *fear* me...
- d. An awareness of what type of people God accepts.
Job 37:24 - People *revere* him. Doesn't God have regard for all the wise in heart (rather than being oppressive toward them - v. 23)? (Alternate translation: "He doesn't have regard to those who are 'self-wise' in their hearts." Either interpretation is instructive about the type of attitude we must have.)

6. God *must* judge; he has the right to do so.

- a. God is described as a consuming fire.
Hebrews 12:28-29 - Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and (in doing this) worship God in an acceptable way, with *reverence* and awe - for our God is a consuming fire.
- b. Judgment - an aspect of God's righteousness.
Isaiah 25:3 - Therefore strong peoples will honor you; cities of ruthless nations will *revere* you (as you destroy powerful cities and protect the needy).
Rev. 15:4 - Who will not *fear* you, O Lord, ... for your righteous acts have been revealed.
- c. Judgment - an expression of God's power and might.
Exodus 14:31 - The Israelites saw the great power of the Lord (against the Egyptians), and *feared* the Lord.
- d. God has the power to judge you.
Matthew 10:28 - *Fear* him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
Luke 12:5 - This is whom you should *fear*: *Fear* him who has power to throw you into hell, after the body is killed. Yes, I tell you, *fear* him.

- e. Some general statements about God judging people.
 - Psalm 76:7-8 - You alone must be *feared*. Who can stand in your presence when you are angry? From heaven you pronounced judgment; the earth *feared* and was quiet (as you rose up to judge and to rescue the afflicted).
 - Psalm 76:12 - He breaks the spirit of rulers; the kings of the earth *fear* him.
 - Psalm 90:11 - Who understands the power of your anger? Your wrath is as great as the *fear* that we owe you.

7. Awareness of impending or future judgment.

- a. Awareness of impending judgment, because of one's sin (an example).
 - Genesis 3:10 - Adam (to God): I was *afraid* because I realized I was naked (because I ate from the forbidden tree).
- b. A coming judgment for all people.
 - 1 Peter 1:17 - You call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, so live your lives as temporary residents here in *reverent fear*.
 - Rev. 14:7 - The angel said with a loud voice, "*Fear* God, and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come."
- c. Fear of judgment if we respond wrongly to the offer of salvation.
 - Romans 11:20-21 - They (Jews, as a group) were broken off because of their unbelief, and you (non-Jews) stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be *afraid*. Because if God did not spare the natural branches (= the Jews), he won't spare you (= non-Jews) either.
 - Hebrews 10:26-27 - If we deliberately go on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth [which means we have rejected it], there is no sacrifice left that can atone for such sins. All we have to look forward to is a *fearful* anticipation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume God's enemies.

8. Specific examples of people being judged.

- a. Fear that occurred when *others* were judged (examples).
 - 2 Samuel 6:9 - David was *afraid* of the Lord that day (after Uzzah had touched the ark and instantly died).
 - 1 Chron. 13:12 - David was *afraid* of God that day (after Uzzah had touched the ark and instantly died).
 - 2 Chron. 20:29 - The *fear* of God came upon all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the Lord had fought against Israel's enemies.
 - Acts 5:11 - Great *fear* came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard about the death of Ananias and Sapphira. (See v. 1-10.)

- b. Fear that will (or should) occur when others are judged.
- Psalm 52:6 - The righteous will see (the judgment of the wicked) and *fear*.
 - Psalm 64:9 - All mankind will *fear* (when they see the judgment of the wicked).
 - Isaiah 59:19 - (When God pays back his enemies...) people from both east and west will *fear* the name of the Lord ... and will *fear* his glory.
 - Zeph. 3:7 - (After the people of Jerusalem saw judgment come to others...) God said, "Surely you will *fear* me and accept instruction." (Then they would not be destroyed ... but instead, they were eager to continue in their corrupt ways.)
 - Zech. 9:5 - (After seeing judgment come to others.) Ashkelon will see it and be *afraid* (etc.).
- c. Fear related to one's own judgment.
- Job 9:35 - If there were a mediator between us, I could speak and not *fear* Him; but by myself, I can't (speak without fear). [Job feared that he would receive undeserved judgment from God, and that it would continue to increase.]
 - Job 23:15 - [Job expects judgment to increase.] This is why I'm terrified of him; I'm *afraid* of him.
 - Micah 7:17 - (After judgment - v. 16.) ... They will come trembling, ... to the Lord our God they will come in dread; they will be *afraid* of you.
 - Luke 23:40 - Man on the cross to another: "Don't you *fear* God, since you are also condemned to death on a cross?"

67 Passages: Genesis 3:10; 28:17; Exodus 3:6; 14:31; 20:18, 20; Deut. 4:10; 6:1-2; 14:23; 17:19; 31:12-13; Joshua 4:23-24; 1 Samuel 12:24; 2 Samuel 6:9; 1 Kings 8:40, 43; 1 Chron. 13:12; 2 Chron. 6:31, 33; 20:29; Job 9:35; 23:15; 37:23-24; Psalm 33:8-9; 40:3; 52:6; 64:9; 65:8; 67:5-7; 76:7-8, 76:12; 86:11; 90:11; 102:15; 119:38; 130:4; Proverbs 2:5; 14:2, 16; Eccles. 3:14; Isaiah 25:3; 59:19; Jeremiah 5:22; 10:7; 32:39; Daniel 6:26; Amos 3:8; Jonah 1:15-16; Micah 7:17; Zeph. 3:7; Zech. 9:5; Malachi 1:14; 2:5; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:5; 23:40; Acts 5:11; 7:32; 19:17; 24:25; Romans 11:20-21; Hebrews 10:26-27; 12:21, 28-29; 1 Peter 1:17; Rev. 14:7; 15:4.