

“In Awe of God” (Ecclesiastes 5:1–7)(2.19.23)

Ecclesiastes 5:1–7 (NIV84)

5 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.

² Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God.

God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

³ As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words.

⁴ When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. ⁵ It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. ⁶ Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, “My vow was a mistake.” Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? ⁷ Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.

THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

LET US PRAY

“In Awe of God”

INTRODUCTION:

I did not pick today’s scripture because we are celebrating Boy Scout Sunday. We have been studying this Book of Ecclesiastes since January 8th, making this the seventh week. We started in chapter 1 verse 1 and have been working our way through each verse. It seems to be divine timing, especially when you consider the movement of God the Holy Spirit that has been happening, which I will share in a few minutes.

It certainly is an appropriate piece of scripture for us to look at now. Consider what is being said about making vows before God. We are told to be slow to speak and quick to listen. Be cautious before uttering anything before God. When you do make a vow before God, make sure you quickly honor what you promised. To do otherwise, makes you a fool. If you have a proper view of God and who you are, you will NOT be so foolish.

When we worship God, it is not about rituals. People were offering sacrifices out of duty, without sincerity or repentance. They worshiped the LORD with their mouths, but not with their hearts. So, Qoheleth warns them, God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore stand in awe of God.

BODY:

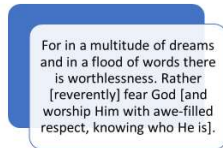
Scouts, how many times have you recited the Scout Oath? Has it become so ingrained in you that you say the

words without thinking about them? The Lord Jesus warns Christians that when they pray we are not to pray in vain repetition. That would be just reciting the words without truly feeling and meaning them.

“The Scout Oath has traditionally been considered to have three promises. Those three promises are delineated by the semicolons in the Oath, which divide it into three clauses. The three promises of the Scout Oath are, therefore: Duty to God and country, Duty to other people, and Duty to self.” A Scout is: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent.



It is NOT insignificant that the Scout Law ends with reverence. What does it mean to be reverent? It is an attitude of deep respect, honor, and deference. Reverent toward what? Reverence towards God.



In the Bible, the truly devout person is typically described as one who “fears the Lord.” Implied are not only a reverent attitude but also the obedient actions that naturally flow from it.

According to the Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Thesaurus, fear and AWE are synonymous with reverence. YES, we must feel a sense of Awe when we relate to God. Related words are esteem, regard, respect, veneration, worship; admiration, amazement, wonder,

and wonderment. How many of us truly stand in awe of God? Do you stand in awe of God?

When we become a member of this church, we make vows. We declare specifics about our belief in God as outlined in the Apostle's Creed. We promise to forsake sin and pursue holiness. As members of this congregation, we promise to faithfully participate in its ministries by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness.

Then I address the congregation: Members of the household of God, I commend these persons to your love and care. Do all in your power to increase their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

The congregation responds:

We give thanks for all that God has already given you and we welcome you in Christian love. As members together with you in the body of Christ and in this congregation of Emmaus Church of Smithville, we renew our covenant faithfully to participate in the ministries of the Church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

When I perform a marriage ceremony, I ask the bride and groom: I ask you now, in the presence of God and these people, to declare your intention to enter into union with each other through the grace of Jesus Christ, who calls you into union with himself as acknowledged in your baptism. After they promise to live together in holy

marriage, they make several vows to each other before God and the church.

When a young child is baptized, the parents and godparents promise to raise the child up in the Christian faith. In return, the church promises to surround and nurture the family in love and support. How seriously do we take our vows, our oaths, our promises?

This Book of Ecclesiastes is about a preacher and teacher named Qoheleth. He has assembled a group, most likely young men, and he is sharing his wisdom to prepare them to face life. He has conducted an intense, life-long investigation because he is looking for meaning. He is looking for something to take hold of and build upon as a foundation for living. From an earthly perspective, which he calls under the sun, or under the heavens, Qoheleth has found life meaningless. It is a vapor, smoke, a mist, that when you reach for it, it slips through your fingers.

It is only when you bring God into the equation does life make sense. Then you can find meaning in the everyday things of life. Your work, your eating, and your drinking are experienced in a different context when you look beyond the sun and into the heavens. Stand in awe of God.

In the first verse of this chapter, Qoheleth warns, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God." Notice it does not say IF – if you go to the house of God. There is an assumption that you WILL go to the house of God. Do you? How often do you gather with fellow believers and worship your Creator? Unfortunately, it doesn't take

much of an excuse for many people to skip church...Even those who have taken vows.

In the sixth verse – “And do not protest to the temple messenger, “My vow was a mistake.” Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?” Nowadays, it is not popular to talk about the anger of God. It is thought that speaking about judgement, the wrath of God, and eternity in hell will offend people. We MUST NOT forget that reverence, awe, and fear are all part of a cord wrapped together.



Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:28 (NIV84) **“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”** It is critical that you

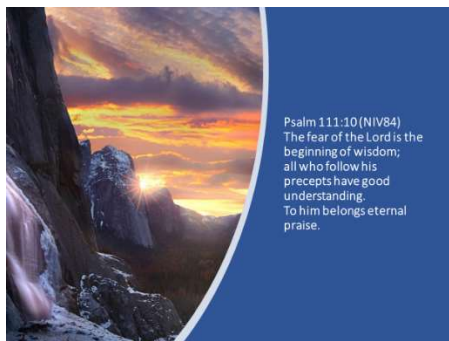
acknowledge that Jesus and all of scripture have a lot to say about the judgment of God.

Deuteronomy 4:24 (NIV84) For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. Hebrews 12:28-29 (NIV84) ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our “God is a consuming fire.”

God is perfect; perfectly holy, perfectly righteous, and perfectly loving. We cannot parse the character, the attributes of God, and create a God of our own choosing. People rationalize their choices and their behaviors. They

make excuses. They take a human view and ignore the truth of God's word. Therefore, it is not reality. It is a dreamland, a fantasy of their own making.

YES, undoubtedly God is love. God loves people. God loves all His creation. At the end of Genesis, God saw that it was very good. When you sin, you are hurting others. You are hurting what God loves, including yourself. When you are careless or reckless and cause harm to anything in God's creation you are offending the Almighty God of the Universe. How can we not stand in Awe of the Supreme Being?



Psalm 111 (NIV84)

¹ Praise the Lord.

I will extol the Lord with all my heart

in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

² Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

³ Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴ He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and compassionate.

⁵ He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works,
giving them the lands of other nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.

8 They are steadfast for ever and ever,
done in faithfulness and uprightness.

9 He provided redemption for his people;
he ordained his covenant forever—
holy and awesome is his name.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.

Yes my friends, we must guard our steps. Proverbs 3:3–7
(NIV84)

3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.

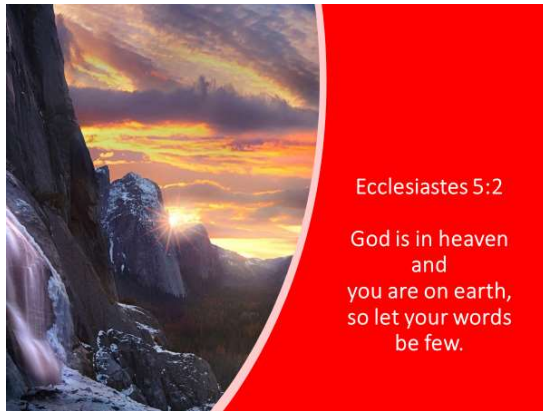
4 Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;

6 in all your ways acknowledge him,

and he will make your paths straight.

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord and shun evil.



Why does Qoheleth state the obvious that God is in heaven and we are on earth? We believe that God is omnipresent – present everywhere at the same time. But, God exists in another realm, the heavenly realm that oversees the material realm. Qoheleth is emphasizing the great gap between the Creator and humankind. We are reminded every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer because it starts, Our Father who art in heaven.

Psalm 115:16 (NIV84) The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to man. The prophet, Nehemiah 9:6 (NIV84) You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you. Isaiah opens the 66th chapter with the LORD saying, ““Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?

Qoheleth states the obvious so that we will submit to the LORD who declares, Isaiah 55:9 (NIV84) “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” No, we

are not to stand in judgment of God but rather, **stand in Awe of God** for He is in heaven and we are on earth, so let your meaningless words of protest be few.

We have seen a mighty movement of God these past two weeks in a small town, Wilmore, Kentucky, at the Christian Asbury University. Here is a social media post from David Sorn on February 12 @ 5PM, sharing what he witnessed there:



“If you haven’t heard about this yet, I want to tell you that God is up to something right now in America! A revival has broken out in Kentucky. A revival for the first time in decades in the United States! Not a “planned revival”

that a local church happened to schedule for two months from now, but a real revival.

On Wednesday, February 8th a speaker at a chapel service at Asbury University gave a powerful message from God’s Word about love and repentance. Many students were deeply affected by it, and about 30 students kept the meeting going after its scheduled end time. And from there, the Lord moved mightily. More and more students came BACK to the service and by nightfall, the massive auditorium was packed.



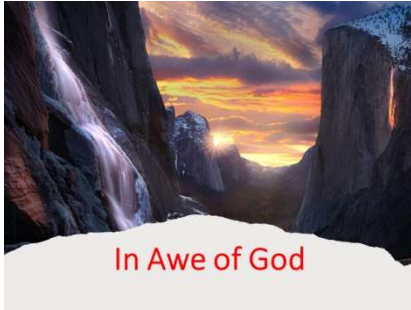
The meeting has now continued, literally WITHOUT STOPPING, for 4.5 days. I just check the livestream and there is not an open seat in the place. People are literally standing in the hallways, out the door, and trying to get in.

I've read incredible firsthand reports of testimonies of people getting saved and touched by God. A local professor spoke of how he walked over to check out what was happening and for the first ten minutes he was so struck by the presence of God that he wasn't even sure what was happening, but that he felt he could stay there the rest of his life.

I've spent much of the last 3 years reading A LOT of books on revivals, and I can tell you one thing: This is what they look like. The service is simple. No flashing lights, no gimmicks. Just testimonies, God's Word, prayer, and worship. They don't even have a band playing right now. Someone just starts singing a song, and the people worship.

Word has it that it's beginning to spread to other local college campuses as well.

Pray for God to move. We need Him!"



Yes, we need God. As Jesus proclaimed in John 3:16 (NIV84)
"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never ending skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

CONCLUSION:

The Apostle John in his first letter: **I John 1:1-4**

From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in – we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we're telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!

– The Message

AMEN & AMEN. LET US PRAY.