

Awesome and Consuming Fire

The modern religious world refuses to present God as He truly is - He is often portrayed as a heavenly grandfather who warns but has no teeth. We must resist the desire to clean up God for greater consumption.

Psalm 99

BIBLE PASSAGE

"Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:28-29

"The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble;
He is enthroned *above* the cherubim, let the earth shake!

2 The Lord is great in Zion,
And He is exalted above all the peoples.

3 Let them praise Your great and awesome name;
Holy is He.

4 The strength of the King loves justice;
You have established equity;
You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt the Lord our God
And worship at His footstool;
Holy is He.

6 Moses and Aaron were among His priests,
And Samuel was among those who called on His name;
They called upon the Lord and He answered them.

7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;
They kept His testimonies
And the statute that He gave them.

8 O Lord our God, You answered them;
You were a forgiving God to them,
And yet an avenger of their *evil* deeds.

9 Exalt the Lord our God
And worship at His holy hill,
For holy is the Lord our God." - Psalm 99

INTRODUCTION

- The inspired writers have given us an image of God that is both loving and terrifying. It is there for a reason, and we have no right to eliminate the fear.
- The image is there to make His creation tremble and rend their hearts (Joel 2:13)
 - "And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil."

Joel called for the people to repent of their sins and turn back to the Lord. And his appeal was urgent. There was no way to escape the coming judgment unless the people returned to the Lord with all sincerity. Note exactly what Joel says: this was the Word of the Lord Himself. The Lord was pleading with the people to return—fasting and weeping over their horrible sins and mourning over their violation of God’s holy nature, His Word, and His commandments.

True repentance necessitated a complete change of heart. The people must be genuine when they fasted. Their tears of weeping and mourning had to be a **genuine expression of sorrow over dishonoring the Lord and His Holy Word.**

(Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (2008). *Joel–Nahum* (p. 27). Leadership Ministries Worldwide.)

- Our God is an Awesome and Consuming Fire, Psalm 99 tells us why.

1

PSALM 99:1-3 - GOD IS THE SUPREME AND ONLY RULER OF THE UNIVERSE

EXPLANATION

A. 99:1 *The Lord reigns.* He is in control.

1. 99:1b His rule is effortless. He rules from a seated position

B. 99:2 None can be compared to Him. Nothing can match Him in power or exaltation. (cf. Isaiah 40:15)

C. One of the ways we can know and appreciate God more fully is to study His attributes. God's attributes are the unique characteristics and qualities that He alone possesses. As humans, we may exhibit these qualities to some degree, but only God demonstrates them fully—perfectly and without fail. God alone is completely ...

1. holy
2. good
3. loving

4. merciful
5. wise
6. true
7. faithful
8. righteous
9. just
10. eternal
11. unchangeable
12. all-powerful (omnipotent)
13. all-knowing (omniscient)
14. present everywhere (omnipresent)

D. How should we respond?

1. 99:3 Praise Him. 99:5a - Exalt Him
2. 99:5b Bow in worship at His footstool
3. 99:9 Worship Him - Humble ourselves before Him

QUOTE



- "Our world today is the fulfillment of what Paul described in Romans 1:18–32.
- It is a world that has lost sight of who God is and what He is like, a world to whom God has revealed Himself but that refuses to glorify Him as God.
- To many people, God is nothing more than the product of their vain imaginations (Ro. 1:21).
- They view God as they wish to see Him, not as He has revealed Himself in His Word and in His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- As a result, sin and wickedness run rampant throughout the world (Ro. 1:28–31).
- Integrity and moral values have all but disappeared.
- People even take pleasure in violating God's laws, totally ignoring or overlooking the fact that God is watching and that they one day face His righteous judgment (Ro. 1:32).
- The world desperately needs to see God as He really is.

- **"Whether we like it or not, God is holy, and ultimately we will have to deal with Him as He is."**

Williams, Don, and Lloyd John Ogilvie. The Preacher's Commentary. Psalms 73-150. Nashville, Tenn., Thomas Nelson, 1987.

2 PSALM 99:3, 5, 9: GOD'S RULE IS PERFECT AND BEYOND REPROACH BECAUSE HE IS HOLY

EXPLANATION

- A. 3 x's Holy in Psalm 99 (vs. 3, 5, 9) - a third of the psalm is about God's holiness.
- B. 3 x's Holy means God is perfect, morally pure, set apart, and unstained by sin.
 1. **"He is pure and righteous ... He cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence."** (Albert Barnes. Barnes Notes on the Old Testament.)
 2. **"He is holy, set apart from His creation, separated, transcendent, high and lifted up, above and beyond His creation, utterly distinct and different from it."** (Steven Lawson and Max Anders. Holman Old Testament Commentary- Psalms.)
 3. **"In Him is no flaw or fault, excess or deficiency, error or iniquity. He is wholly excellent, and is therefore called holy. In His words, thoughts, acts, and revelations as well as in Himself, He is perfection itself."** (Charles Spurgeon. Treasury of David.)

4. **“Because God is holy, He is free from the moral imperfections and frailties common to man (Hos. 11:9) and can be counted on to be faithful to His promises (Ps. 22:3–5).”** (R. Laird Harris, ed. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)
5. **“Holy is a word to emphasize the distance between God and man: not only morally, as between the pure and the polluted, but in the realm of being, between the eternal and the creaturely.”** (R. Laird Harris, ed. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.)
6. **“He is removed from and far above all those limitations and imperfections that mark man.”** (H. C. Leupold. Exposition of the Psalms, p. 696.)

3

PSALM 99:6-8 - THREE MEN WHO UNDERSTOOD THE HOLINESS OF GOD

EXPLANATION

- A. 99:6-8 Moses, Aaron, and Samuel - they understood God's holiness
- B. What they had in common:
 1. Called on the Lord (99:6b)
 2. He spoke and guided them by a pillar of cloud
 3. Understood that obedience was crucial to their relationship with God (99:7)
 4. He forgave their sins when they asked for forgiveness, but He disciplined them when they went astray.

4 WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN OUR LIVES:

EXPLANATION

A. Our entire life is to be filled with reverence for God

1. 99:3 - Even His name is holy and should be respected, never to be taken in vain.
2. 99:5 - God is to be lifted **UP** in worship and not brought **DOWN** to our level.

B. "God's love and mercy can only be truly understood in the light of His holiness.

1. Likewise, we will never fully appreciate God's faithful love for us until we grasp the concept of His absolute holiness.
2. When we do, we can have only one response: to bow down before Him in submission and worship.
3. We will give ourselves over completely to Him, offering our lives as the only reasonable sacrifice for His love and mercies (Ro. 12:1). (Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (2015). [Psalms: Chapters 42–106](#): Vol. II (p. 356). Leadership Ministries Worldwide.)
4. True worship (John 4:23-24; Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:15)

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 4:23-24 (ASV - American Standard Version)

²³ But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers.

²⁴ God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Romans 12:1 (ESV - English Standard Version)

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Peter 2:5 (CSB - Christian Standard Bible)

⁵ you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

BIBLE PASSAGE

2 Corinthians 5:15 (ASV - American Standard Version)

¹⁵ and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.

CONCLUSION

1. Prepare to meet your God
2. Psalm 99:8 "And yet an avenger of their *evil* deeds."
3. 1 Cor. 15, forgiveness through Christ, mend your hearts and not your clothes