

THE THEOLOGY OF ECCLESIASTES¹

1. SOME PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

- A. Do we believe that ALL PARTS of the Bible are inspired? We would say, "***Absolutely!***"
- B. How should we react to this statement? "*Inspiration sets down accurately what passes, but the conclusions and reasonings are, after all, man's.*"
- C. Do we believe that any book in the Old Testament "*does not anticipate the Gospel*"? (a quote from a book). **No!** Every book in the OT should (and does) anticipate the gospel and the coming of Christ.
- D. Do we believe that the original autographs of Scripture contained errors? **No!** We believe in inerrancy. But if something is recorded that is not true, that is a mistake, and that is not orthodoxy.
- E. Is it proper to say the following about any book in the Bible? "*No statement of this book should be considered the FULL TRUTH of God unless it be confirmed by other Scripture.*"

(sources of the above quotes: 1st two: *The Scofield Reference Bible*, 1909, 1917, 1937 & 1945, p. 696 & *The Holy Bible: Oxford Pilgrim Edition*, p. 852).

These kinds of statements are made about Ecclesiastes. Why are these statements accepted by orthodox believers? Because:

- 1. **Ecclesiastes is extremely hard.**
- 2. **Some of its contents do not seem to be true.**

But are we willing to say there is a book in the Bible that is not true? ***Absolutely not!*** The statement that follows (i.e. that bad men, mistaken good men, and sometimes the Devil are quoted, but not to be followed) is true, ***but the logic behind the statement is not!***

GOD

Scripture Writer

Bad man, mistaken man, or the Devil

In regard to the above diagram though, there is no third party (i.e. a bad man, mistaken man or the Devil) writing in Ecclesiastes. **Solomon is writing after God has moved upon him.**

By 'bailing out,' the above commentators have excused themselves from having to properly interpret the book of Ecclesiastes.

Note: **Eccl. 1:1 cf. Prov. 1:1** – These two statements are different, to be sure, but they are parallel. Each has 3 parts:

Ecclesiastes

"The words of the Preacher"

"The son of David"

"King in Jerusalem"

vs.

vs.

vs.

Proverbs

"The proverbs of Solomon"

"The son of David"

"King of Israel"

Now suppose we said about Proverbs what some say about Ecclesiastes. Would that fly? *No way!*

Compare **Amos 1:1**: "***The words of Amos***" cf. the first two statements above. They are very similar, yet no one would question Amos' credibility.

¹ These notes were originally compiled by me while working on a master's degree in August, 1996 and are taken from video lectures which were part of the course *Old Testament Theology*, taught by Dr. Terry Rude, Bob Jones University. (revised, August, 2019)–Mike Edwards

Now compare **Romans 1:1 & 3** (v. 2 is in parentheses so skip that for the moment): "*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God ...concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*" To say, "Well, those are just Paul's views in Romans, and not to be followed unless corroborated by other verses is *NONSENSE*, or even *HERESY*!"

*Why then do people do that with reference to Ecclesiastes? **Mainly because it's a hard book!** "All is vanity"? Surely not everything is vanity (which is true). So now, if we take this strong orthodox view of Ecclesiastes—and we do—then we have our work cut out for us.*

2. THE FIVE GREAT THEMES IN ECCLESIASTES:

- A. **VANITY**
- B. **MAN IN HIS LABOR**
- C. **WISDOM**
- D. **PLEASURE**
- E. **GOD**

- A. **VANITY** (*Hebel*) (heb-bell) occurs 37 times in Ecclesiastes (@ 3 times/chapter i.e. it clearly saturates the book). First, let's go outside the text of Ecclesiastes to find out what *hebel* means.
Dt. 32:21 - "...they have provoked me to anger with their VANITIES..." "Vanities" = idols
Job 21:34 - "Vain" = the "comfort" of Job's friends
Isa. 30:7 - "Vain = the Help of the Egyptians.

So our simplified definition of *Hebel* is:

- 1) *Hebel* = **Failure or inability to produce that which is expected or desired.** e.g. **Idols are *hebel*** (Dt. 32:21) because they are not able to do what they are supposed to do. They fail. They are unable to produce rain or anything else. **The comfort of Job's friends is *hebel*** because their efforts produced frustration, not the comfort expected and desired. **The help of the Egyptians is *hebel*** because their military aid would be unable to rescue or to protect the Jewish people.
- 2) *Hebel* comes from a root meaning "*breath*" or "*vapor*" so many scholars have also concluded that it implies **transitoriness, emptiness, meaninglessness.** (i.e. *It's like an empty cookie jar.* You opened it with anticipation, thinking you would get some, but when you lifted the lid, they were all gone).

The two ideas (1 & 2 above) are entirely congruent with each other. Life is vain, or "inherent in human life is a failure to produce what we long for and expect in an ultimate sense...There is in this life an utter impossibility to achieve utopia."

But what about a person who trusts Christ, and has eternal life? Well, when the believer runs over a nail while driving his car, does his tire go any less flat than an unsaved person's tire? When he stubs his toe, does it hurt any less than before he got saved? **Actually, sometimes, frustrations are even worse for a Christian, since the believer realizes and is chagrined by the evil of this world.** So yes, even the Christian is faced with the inherent *hebel* of this life.

Note: the word "**FRUSTRATION**" does not occur in the KJV Bible. "*To frustrate*" occur twice in the OT: Ezra 4:5 & Isa 44:25, and once in the NT (Gal. 2:21).

Instead, the Bible deals with **FRUSTRATION under the theme of "**HEBEL.**"**

Vanity implies the idea of life being frustrating ("*absurdity, frustration, futility, nonsense*" –NKJV footnote).

DEFINITION OF FRUSTRATE: "**To prevent from accomplishing a purpose or desire; to thwart.**" (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*). So the word "*frustrate*" is very similar to "*hebel.*"

Can anything erase *the hebel* from human life? Solomon makes three proposals:

1. **Man in his labor**
2. **Wisdom**
3. **Pleasure**

SOLOMON'S CONCLUSION: None of these can rescue life from its *hebel*. That's an oversimplification, but it helps us think properly as we come to book of Ecclesiastes.

So then the fifth theme comes in, which teaches us that the best we can do is have a right perspective and focus on God! This truth opens our minds to the Gospel.

"Vanity" (*hebel*) – an inability or failure to produce what is expected or desired. Other common phrases associated with vanity in Ecclesiastes:

- a) "*Under the sun*" - the expression "vanity" **is limited to the sphere of human life on earth** i.e. the "*nasty now and now*". The statements that seem to deny an afterlife, **are not doing that**, but rather calling attention to the now.
- b) "*Vexation of spirit*" sometimes translated: "*Chasing after the wind*" since wind and spirit (Heb. *ruach*) are the same word. Thus sometimes it's hard to know whether it is wind or spirit that is being referred to. The idea is that these things are like chasing the wind. It's totally impossible.

B. MAN AND HIS LABOR. Here is a panorama of verses dealing with this theme from a well-written summary from a student paper:

"*What advantage does man have?*" (1:3; 2:22; 3:9; 5:11, 16; 6:11-12). Generations come and go. Only the earth remains constant (1:4). Man has no lasting existence. He does not know what the future holds for him (7:14; 8:7; 9:12; 11:6), and when he dies, he will neither take any fruit of his labor with him (5:15-16) nor will he have a lasting remembrance in the minds of those who remain (1:11; 2:16; 9:5, 15). Furthermore, man is not satisfied (6:7). Even money cannot satisfy (5:10, 12). In the last analysis the only reward of man's labors is just the pleasure they may give him (2:10; 5:18; 9:9). This bleak picture becomes more desolate as it is framed with the thought that life ends in only one fate, death. The wise and the foolish (2:14-16), those who find pleasure and those who do not (6:6), and even the righteous and the wicked (9:2f), all face the same fate. In fact, man is bound to a level of fate as low as that of the beasts (3:19-21). All die. To be sure a more barren portrait of man and his activity in this world could scarcely present itself in literature."

Notice that the wicked as well as the just, man as well as animal, face the same fate: *Death!* But the fact that the righteous and the wicked, both man and beast all face the same fate of death, DOES NOT MEAN THEY ALL FACE THE SAME ETERNAL FATE AFTER DEATH." Remember, they face the same fate "UNDER THE SUN!"

Historical Perspective on Solomon's Effort at Labor.

4. **His building projects** (I Kings 9:15-19). He built Fortified cities (Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer); Storage cities; cavalry forts.
5. **His military** (I Kings 10:26). 1,400 chariots; 12,000 horsemen; 40,000 stalls of horses.
6. **His palace.** The "*Hall of the forest of Lebanon*" (I Kings 7:1-5). 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, 45 feet high, 3 rows of 15 cedar pillars; The "*Hall of Columns*" (I Kings 7:6) - 75 feet by 45 feet [a covered porch with columns]; The "*Hall of Judgment*" (his throne room) (I Kings 7:7).

7. **Solomon's throne (I Kings 10:18-20)** - overlaid with ivory and gold, six steps with twelve lions one on each end of each step, lions on either side of the armrests. "***There was not the like made in any kingdom***" (I Kings 10:20b). So he had it all. All of his drinking vessels were of gold. Silver was considered commonplace (I Kings 10:21).

In other words, MAN AND HIS LABOR is NOT an answer to life's Hebel i.e. life's FRUSTRATION!

C. WISDOM. Wisdom is exalted in Proverbs (4:7 - "***Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom.***"). What does that mean? That wisdom is the ultimate that can be sought for. **But the point is, wisdom does not remove this hebel of life. Can wisdom rescue man from this hebel? No! "I set my mind to know wisdom"** (1:13, 17; 2:12; 7:23, 25; 8:16), "***I realize that this also is striving after the wind***"(1:17). **Wisdom has many merits, but it cannot solve the problem of life.** It strengthens wise men (7:19), exalts men (8:1), preserves life (7:10-12), gives success (10:10), and is superior in strength to weapons (9:13-18).

Qoheleth (i.e. *the preacher*) especially emphasizes the value of wisdom by contrasting it with folly. Fools walk in darkness (2:14), consume their own flesh (4:5), do not even realize they are doing evil (5:1), and are given to anger (7:9). They are characterized by much talking (5:3; 10:14), their laughter is offensive (7:6), they lack sense (10:3), they are prone to an early death (7:17); and God has no delight in them (5:4). On the other hand wisdom is the gift of God (2:26; 12:11), and '***excels folly as light excels darkness***'(2:13). It shows its superiority to folly in several ways (4:13-16; 7:4, 5; 10:2, 12-14), **but it does not erase the vanity of man's earthly setting.** Wisdom cannot alter a man's fate (2:15), and much wisdom causes grief (1:18). It cannot guarantee bread for a man (9:11), and its excess is able to ruin a person (7:16). Whatever value it affords man is ultimately worthless since there is no exercise of wisdom in the realm of the dead (9:10). ***Qoheleth (the Preacher) can legitimately make these conclusions because he alone is the wisest of all persons*** (1:16; 2:9)."

1:18- Actually, the wiser you become, the more grief and sorrow you experience, since you understand what's really going on! A moron watching a newscast doesn't get too upset about what he sees. But a wise person feels grief and sorrow. Pythagoras, Socrates, Einstein, etc., have tried but never answered all the questions.

In other words, WISDOM is NOT an answer to life's HEBEL i.e. life's FRUSTRATION!

D. PLEASURE. Solomon definitely had it:

- a. **Food** (I Kings 4:20-23).
 - i. Twelve officials, one for each month to care for daily provisions.
 - ii. **Daily provisions** : (I Kings 4:22). 30 measures (58 gallons/measure-approximately 1,740 gallons) of fine flour, or 30 fifty gallon drums of flour. In addition: 60 measures (approximately 3,180 gallons) of meal. [64 fifty gallon drums]. We are told that they lacked nothing (I Kings 4:27).
- b. **Wealth.** Solomon's annual gold income alone (I Kings 10:14) was about 800,000 ounces (23 metric tons). At \$1,500/ounce that equals: **\$1.2 billion dollars!** If we went and bought new cars at a price of \$40,000.00/car, we could buy 30,000 cars *per year!*
- c. **Women.** 700 wives & 300 concubines.

So the man who wrote this book, who 'had it all,' said none of it is able to get rid of the vanity (*hebel*) of life.

In other words, PLEASURE is NOT an answer to life's HEBEL i.e. life's FRUSTRATION!

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE PHILOSOPHY CENTRAL TO THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES: THE SO CALLED “EPICUREAN PASSAGES” IN THE BOOK.

Epicureanism: it's basically misunderstood. – The true, original meaning was that the aim of life is pleasure i.e. *morally pure pleasure*. Pleasure was the absence of pain; the avoiding of everything disturbing; the pursuit of tranquility of mind and life. Consequently, they did not believe in creation. They were in fact, the first evolutionists.

Lucretius (Roman Epicurean, 94-55 B.C.) said: "*That the world has by no means been created by divine power is clear: clear from the fact that it contains so many flaws*" i.e. the lousy condition of things shows there is no God. He sounds like a lot of today's atheists. **In reality, we know the lousy condition is due to man's fall!** Modern day atheists are simply following in Lucretius' footsteps.

So Epicureanism had a noble goal, but was messed up. Epicureanism was a reform of the earlier Cyrenaic school of philosophy. (This school stems from Cyrene in Libya). **Part of their slogan i.e. the Cyrenaic motto, is captured in I Cor. 15:32: "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die."** Theirs was a BASE pursuit of pleasure.

The main verses dubbed "*Epicurean passages*" by the liberals are listed below. These are the ones usually mentioned & what their main focus is.

THE THREE KEY ELEMENTS IN THE "EPICUREAN" PASSAGES OF ECCLESIASTES:

1) EARTHLY PROVISIONS.

2:24: Eating & Drinking are emblematic of earthly provisions. This becomes clear as we go through the book. Today we would include clothing, cars, cell phones, etc. i.e. earthly provisions.

2) THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF MAN'S LABORS.

Notice "*good*" & "*enjoy*" i.e. Man should enjoy his GOOD (*not sinful*) accomplishments.

3) GOD'S ALLOTMENT FOR MAN IN THIS LIFE.

- **3:12** – "*I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat & drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor. It is the gift of God.*" "*them*" = the times of a man's life.
- **3:22** – "*Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?*" "*In his own works*" = rejoice in his calling.
- **5:18-19** – "*Behold that which I have seen: It is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor that he [undertakes] under the sun, all the days of his life which God giveth him; for it is his portion. Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion and to rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God.*" i.e. There is nothing wrong with a businessman who is blessed and in return can use that money for God's work.
(Of course we must be careful not to covet what God has given to another man).
- **9:7-9** – "*Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy...let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity...for that is thy portion in this life...*"

So each of these verses calls attention to one of the above-mentioned three areas.

TO SUMMARIZE REGARDING THE EPICUREAN PASSAGES:

"God has ordained that man enjoy his earthly provisions and the good that he accomplishes in his labor."

E. GOD: i.e. THE FEAR OF THE LORD. This is the fifth and final theme in Ecclesiastes.

Let's go to the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, read its conclusion and work backward from that.

Eccl. 12:12-13: *Fear God & Keep His commandments... for God will bring every act into judgment.*

Now, how does this integrate with the other themes?

Well, vanity (i.e. frustration) marks life. And neither man's accomplishments, his wisdom, or his wealth can change that. So the summary Solomon then focuses on is God.

The summation/conclusion is this: **WE NEED A RIGHT PERSPECTIVE OF GOD.**

WHAT IS THE FEAR OF GOD?

1) A proper reverence for God

2) A being afraid to disobey God

The fear of the Lord: i.e. a right perspective of God.

So Solomon says, there is really nothing better in life than to enjoy God's calling for you. To enjoy God's will for you. Enjoy what God gives you, and what you can accomplish for Him!

Life is not to be a pursuit of getting rid of the vanity and going after utopia!

Why? Because you can't get rid of the vanity, you can't reach utopia here on earth! Rather, you should accept God's allotment for you, and be happy for what you can accomplish for God in this life. Utopia will come only when the Lord Jesus returns to rule as King of the earth.

So this book (Ecclesiastes) is an accurate portrait & philosophy of life!

12:10-14 – What is Solomon talking about in regard to verse 12? ("*of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh*"). In light of what he has given in Ecclesiastes, he's probably referring to the area of philosophy i.e. you can write a lot of books and do a lot of study, but you will still not get all the answers to life. In other words, "*The answer to life is not found in books.*"

SO SOLOMON'S THRUST IS:

Accept God's allotment, learn to be content with what you have in that allotment, learn to enjoy God's allotment, enjoy your work in this life and fear God. cf. Phil. 4:11 is an excellent complementary verse. ("*I have learned in whatever state I'm in, to be content.*") & I Tim. 6:6-8 ("*be content with food & raiment*").

3 WAYS TO LOOK AT THE PROBLEM OF LIFE (POL)

ORTHODOX WISDOM

Conventional Religion i.e. traditional thinking: There is an answer for everything. This is typical of *Systematic Theology*. There is a great tendency to simplify and be unrealistic. They don't face the reality of the toughness & "unfairness" of life.

BIBLICAL WISDOM

Man has no answer to the POL
God does have the answer to the POL
Man's Responsibility is not to solve life's problems, but to obey God!

EXISTENTIALISM

Life is Absurd.
The POL has no answer.
Man's only responsibility is to himself.

So in Ecclesiastes we are looking at **PHILOSOPHIES OF LIFE!**

Ecclesiastes is actually a philosophy book inside of a philosophy book i.e. the Bible.

SUMMARY OF THE THINKING IN ECCLESIASTES:

- a. Man Cannot Understand the Purpose/Problem of Life. (6:10-12; 8:7, 8, 17; 9:1, 11, 12; 10:14; 11:5). The wisest man who ever lived on the face of the earth, apart from Christ, says, you can't understand the Problem of Life in many situations.
- b. God Knows the Purpose. (3:10-11). v. 10 says God allows problems to come into our lives. When Adam fell, we fell, and got the results of the curse. In verse 11 "*world*" = *eternity*. It's best to add "*yet*" or "*nevertheless*" before "*so that*". **In other words, we are eternal beings and have an appetite for eternity, but still we cannot understand everything and the whole Problem of Life and what God is doing. God alone understands the Problem of Life.**
- c. The result of God's knowing the purpose is that we are to enjoy God's created world. This is God's will and blessing. Just recall the theology of Ecclesiastes. Enjoy the allotment that God has given us to live out in the world.

The philosophy propagated in Ecclesiastes is valid for all time in human life.

There are difficulties in chapters 3, 9 & 10 that the Jehovah's Witnesses often try to use that we haven't dealt with here, but through prayer, study, and the use of good commentaries, we should be able to solve those difficulties.

THE HEART OF THE SOLUTION: Ecclesiastes is a philosophy for life **NOW i.e. ON THE EARTH!**
i.e. "**UNDER THE SUN.**"

A focus on the afterlife is basically ignored or denied in the book, since that is NOT the focus of the book.
Our view of eternity must be balanced with a view of life now. The emphasis in the NT is to be "*heavenly minded*" but the emphasis here in Ecclesiastes is to "*be earthly good.*"

RELATED OBSERVATIONS FROM JOB:

- d. The Universe is Beyond Man. God demonstrates this first, by showing Job things that man can admire. (Job 38-39). Finally after 37 chapters, God begins to speak in a different way than He has heretofore.
 - i. He shows Job that the universe is beyond man! 38:1-2 - *Who is this that is clouding up things by dumb words!* Wow! Basically God is saying, *Job you really didn't know what you were talking about! In fact, Job, come along with me now, and I'll ask you some questions!* (v.3). Questions on: the creation (vv. 3-4); the sea (vv.8-11); the morning (v.12); the weather; snow, hail, ice; the Constellations & stars; the clouds & lightning; the animals (38:39-39:30).
 - ii. God then shows Job things that man only partly grasps. (40-41). In 40:4 "*Behold I am vile*" - "*vile*" = **to be small, i.e. I am nothing!** So Job admits that the world and everything else is beyond him. Lesson: **Our task is not to solve those things beyond our grasp. It would be like asking a first grader to solve problems of nuclear physics.** He doesn't have the capacity to solve those things! He should stick with first grade level problems. The essence of Hebrew wisdom literature is: We are not called to solve the POL. This is the essence of a correct philosophy even for believers today.
- e. So we have a portrait of the Range of God's Creative Thought. The range of God's creative thought is unlimited. God is way beyond the human mind. Man does not observe most of the universe. It's for the pleasure of God.
- f. Man is Not the Center of the Universe! The Center of the Universe is GOD!

SUPPLEMENTARY STUDY ON THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

Among the Hebrew synonyms for fear, "Yara" (Yah-ray) is the key word.

(Note: The transliterations can vary, so don't worry about some differences in the spelling of the transliterations).

1. *Chathath* (Haw-thath) - "terror," "shatter." 1:21; 31:8
2. *Arats* (Nah-rath) - "alarm, "startling" (a sudden burst of fear) 1:29; 7:21; 20:3; 31:6
3. *Gur* (Goor) - "be afraid," "fear" (not quite as pointed and dynamic as the first two) 1:17; 18:22
4. *Chaphaz* (Kaw-fazz) - "trembling" (a bit more dynamic than #3, but not perhaps as dynamic as the first two) 20:3

Actions associated with fearing Yahweh:

Walking

Loving

Serving

Keeping God's commandments

Worshipping

Swearing by His name (an exercise of allegiance)

Clinging to Him

Hearing

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS REGARDING FEAR:

1. Fear not.

1. We are talking about "real" fear i.e. fright. This is important to note, because today the popular view is that fearing God only involves reverence, but nothing of real fear. ***That is false!***
2. The synonyms contain anxiety-producing elements (e.g. *shattering, terror, startling, alarm*).

So a careful examination of what "*not to fear*" gives us some good insight into what the word *fear* means (& meant). It implies real fear.

2. Fear of Yahweh.

1. "*Fear not.*" Usages of the word fear teach us that there is an element of real fear in it.
2. Synonyms containing anxiety producing elements are lacking when speaking of fearing Yahweh. **We do not find the ideas of trembling, terror, alarm, in reference to fearing God.** So while there are some similarities, there are also definite differences.
3. It contains the idea of "***Reverential Awe.***"
 - a. NT quotations of Deut. 6:13 & 10:20 (fear = worship) e.g. Mt. 4:8-10. Jesus quotes from Deut. 6:13, but clearly associates it with "worship."
OT Fear = NT Worship. The same idea is seen in Dt. 10:20.
 - b. Deut. 10:17 - "***a great God, a mighty and a terrible.***" The word "terrible" is *Yara*. ***Awesome*** (NASV) translates it much better. **So there is reverence and awe here.**
 - c. Ps. 139:14 - "***Fearfully & wonderfully made***" Fearfully here is basically synonymous with wonderfully i.e. **miraculous, marvelous, amazing.** That is an accurate description of the development of the child in the womb.

- d. Associated actions. **They imply that the fear of Yahweh is a principal motive for obedience** (especially "*walking,*" "*servicing,*" "*keeping,*" etc. **So...the fear of the Lord is a very legitimate motive for obeying the Word of God.** So...in the name of common sense, Fear of God is real fear (like a kid fears his parents, though of course that changes as a child becomes older).

DIAGRAM OF THE FEAR OF YAHWEH

FEAR OF YAHWEH

(it has two elements)

REVERENTIAL AWE

(Today, this is overemphasized, to the extent that there is no fear of God involved)

FEAR TO DISOBEY

(two reasons)

ANTICIPATED PUNISHMENT

(emphasizes anxiety)

MARRING OF THE RELATIONSHIP

(emphasizes love)

The above two sides accurately duplicate how a child obeys.
When young, he obeys out of fear, later out of love.

1) **I John 4:18** (this verse is the reason the whole idea of real fear of God is often tossed out) "*fear hath torment*" where "*torment*" equals "*punishment.*" The idea is that fear is motivated, stimulated, stirred up, by punishment. They are linked together (associated) with punishment.

2) **Fear is part of sin's punishment** (Lev. 26:17; Dt. 28:25, 66). Note that part of the punishment that God would bring on His people if they broke the covenant, was an irrational fear, a paranoia of their enemies. So here fear is connected with punishment.

Dt. 28 is significant, since it is the final form of the law...*but it is still the same idea* (v. 25 - *they will flee seven directions in fear.* cf. v. 66). In summary, **FEAR IS THE PUNISHMENT FOR DISOBEDIENCE.**

Go back to I John 4:18: Note he is saying "*because fear hath torment* [i.e. *punishment*]." That is, fear is linked with punishment. **The fear that is mutually exclusive with love, is the anxiety of anticipated punishment.**

The person who disobeys will be anxious about punishment. But fully mature love motivates a person to obey. And if he obeys, he need not fear punishment! That is the message and thrust of this verse in I John 4:18. He is not fully mature (perfected) in love.

The best analogy to help us understand "the fear of the Lord" is a son obeying or disobeying a father. (see diagram below)

FEAR...

(passing of time)...

LOVE

When a child is immature, he has lots of fear, and is *motivated to obey by fear*. But when he is mature, he has little fear, *but is motivated by love*.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEAR AND LOVE:

How could both "fear of God" be the essence of OT religion & yet "love of God" be the essence of OT religion?

The answer is illustrated in I John 4:18. The two are interrelated! **Reverential fear and awe give way to love as we mature in the faith.** So the word fear contains the two ideas of a) *reverential awe* and b) *fear of punishment when we disobey*. The other idea emphasizes love.

So the OT & NT illustrate the same idea as seen above i.e. as we mature the fear gives way to love.
(cf. John Newton, *Amazing Grace*, v. 2 "*Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, & grace my fear relieved"*)