

The Final Stages of Israel's Apostasy
Lesson 3 - A People Who Forgot Their God
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Introduction: We need to understand the nature of the spiritual battles of God's people.

A. The battleground has and will always be for the hearts and minds of men. Changing the heart is no easy task. **(Jer 17:1, 7-10)**

1. Understanding the nature and thoughts of God is the only hope for man.

2. Satan's goal is to block, obscure and distort the nature of God to men.

(2 Cor 4:3-4)

B. This is a battle that is never won as well.

1. We are "leaky buckets" therefore we constantly need solid teaching.

2. True understanding is not easy. It requires a spiritual commitment.

(Prov 12:15; 16:2)

3. This battle is fought to teach the next generation!

I. The Nature and Mind of God is the focus of our battle

A. When we truly come to a knowledge of the nature of God then it changes us.

1. What did God say about Himself? **(Ex 34:6-7)**

2. He wanted us to know of His mercy, grace, longsuffering, goodness, truth, forgiveness and justice. Why?

3. His character transforms our character if we will seek Him and find Him.

B. God started transforming His people by teaching them the fear of God. **(Deut 5:24-29)**

1. Consider what it means to truly fear God. How did God teach them this?

2. How does a fear of God lead to other profitable things? **(Prov 1:5-7; 2:2-7)**

3. How do people act when they do not fear God?

4. A great test of a person is when they are asked to examine God's word about a matter they are practicing or want to believe.

C. Consider how God's Nature molds us.

1. **God is light and truth** – He hates falsehood and praises integrity. Men respect His words and wisdom. The silence of God causes men to be silent.

2. **God is holy** – He hates sin and must punish sinners. Sin is not taken lightly.

3. **God is merciful and patient** – He develops men in wisdom and gives them time.

4. **God wants us to reason and see**, so He helps us keep a sound mind by teaching and warning of heart diseases that destroy the mind.

II. The people of God have often forgotten God

A. How can this be? **(Jer 2:10-13)**

1. People forget God because God stands in the way of their flesh! **(Rom 1:28)**

2. When you want something bad enough you will come to even fight God.

B. Consider the apostasy cycle of the Judges. **(Judges 3:7; 1 Sam 12:9-11)**

1. When people lose a fear of God then they discard Him.

2. You will then see a change of worship with a corresponding change in morals.

C. It takes great effort for men to remember God over time. **(Heb 11:6)**

1. When leaders cease fearing God then they will start lowering the standards.

2. Next there will be pressure applied on teachers to accommodate rather than to rebuke and warn.
3. What does the nature of God teach us about the kind of teachers that we must demand? **(Ezk 3:17-21)**
4. When the people of God want something “new and interesting” then they have lost the fear of God. **(Jer 14:10-11)**

III. How a corrupt leadership destroys the people of God

- A. God’s leaders are given the task of reminding the people who God is and what He wants. Godly watchmen see the dangers and grieve over the people. **(Jer 8:19-22)**
 1. When worldly men are in control they will fight against God and His ways.
 2. The strongest reaction of the leaders was against Jeremiah! **(Jer 14:14; 18:18)**
- B. The false leaders perverted the nature of God by teaching “grace, peace and assurance” apart from God’s standard. **(Jer 6:13-16)**
 1. They develop a concept of God that has no practical impact on doctrine.
 2. They made God in their image and thus have a changeable God. The idea of “restoration” is not flexible with the changing whims of men and culture.
 3. They profited by ignorance and provided teachers to promote it!
 4. They would focus on relationships with men as their primary focus. They would define service to God in such a way that would eliminate discussion of God’s word on any question.
 4. These actions over time will produce a haughty spirit of pride in the people where they no longer will listen. **(Micah 2:6-8; Jer 25:3-12)**

IV. The failure of the reforms of Josiah

- A. Josiah had God’s word read to him for the first time. **(2 Chron 34:18-21)**
 1. He mourns and asks God for help. He was not willing just to “try to have positive thoughts.” He wanted the truth of God.
 2. The answer should not have surprised him. **(2 Chron 34:23-28)**
 3. God however recognized Josiah. **(2 Tim 2:19)**
- B. Josiah tries anyway to change the people. **(2 Chron 34:30-33)**
 1. Have you ever thought: “I will make them do what is right!”?
 2. He had them observe the Passover. **(2 Chron 35:1, 5, 18-19)**
 3. He had to try and he did! What did God think of the fruits of his efforts?
- C. Jeremiah started preaching during the reign of Josiah. **(Jer 1:1-2)**
 1. Would you liked to have preached with such a king in power?
 2. What did Jeremiah say about the reforms of Josiah? ---- NOTHING!
 3. He called Judah’s actions a pretense. **(Jer 3:9-11)**

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe in your own words the nature of God. How should these things change us?
2. What are the first steps in knowing God?
3. Why do some people who once knew God cease to fear Him? **(Jer 6:15)**
4. What are some common characteristics of teachers who do not fear God?
5. Why did the reforms of Josiah fail?