

Isaiah 66:1,2

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S#1452

CW 203

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Tremble at God's Word

† **He is the Creator.** (v.1)

† **He is the LORD.** (v.2)

In the name of Jesus, the Word of God in the flesh, dearly redeemed people of God:

As a pastor, I'm amazed how often my best efforts fail. But I have an amazing Savior who lives in His people. In our last service I encouraged a few minutes of meditation before worship. When the organ starts five minutes before the service, let's prepare our hearts. That request might work better if we didn't have the same organist at the bench who had nothing to do with it. But I heard this long before our Worship Director suggested it. In fact, my pastor was looking right at me. In my home congregation out west, members came from miles around. Christian fellowship was a rare pleasure. Our pastor stood waiting for a few weeks, then kindly asked us to be seated five minutes early to read the Scriptures and hymns. A few years ago at Thanksgiving Church in Wuhan, China, I saw nearly 200 people practicing hymns before the other 1200-1300 arrived. They were preparing to sing for the King!

God-pleasing fellowship flows from sincere worship, not the other way around. The Holy Spirit says in Ecclesiastes: ***"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. 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. As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words."*** (5:1-3) Pastor was doing us a favor to help us **Tremble at God's Word.**

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Isn't it true? Whatever good God gives, Satan will try to corrupt, whether it's choice fruit on a forbidden tree or forbidden pleasures in your choices. We naturally worship and serve created things rather than the Creator. Isaiah has been pleading with God's people for sixty-five chapters. He wants everyone to know this is not his idea. All the faithful prophets of the LORD stressed this – Jeremiah (17) and Ezekiel (85), here also Isaiah (23). They all claimed: ***"This is what the LORD says..."***

Centuries earlier Moses said the same and backed it up with miracles, more than anyone else in the Old Testament. Still the people rebelled against the LORD and His prophet. And when God sent the Prophet in the Person of His only begotten Son, Jesus told the Jewish religious leaders: ***"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life...If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."*** (John 5:39f,46 NIV84) Jesus did more miracles than Moses, even raising people from the dead. But do you remember what His highly religious enemies wanted to do after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? Kill him again – Jesus and Lazarus! (John 12:10f) Sin makes no sense when people reject their **Creator** – or – when we put our friends before the Friend of sinners.

This is what the LORD says: "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?" The Creator fills heaven and earth. He needs no *house* for shelter. After they returned from Exile, He scolded His people for not building a new temple in Jerusalem. Why? His honor. They were so busy with their own houses, they neglected His. Whether it's the temple in Jerusalem or what we call a "church" today, God will not tolerate idolatry. He will not give His glory to another, not to friends and family, not to buildings either. As we repair and remodel this house of worship, we **Tremble at God's Word. He is the Creator.** ***"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*** (1 Samuel 16:7) Our best efforts may look feeble to

some who are used to big buildings of wood and stone. God's people sometimes feel so small. But our Lord Jesus says, "*Fear not little flock for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" Then He adds: "*Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" (Luke 12:32 KJV, 34f NIV84)

How do you show your heart's treasure is in heaven? Go back to today's Old Testament reading. In one of his last sermons Moses described how an Israelite farmer could honor God after they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. With the first sheaf of grain or cluster of grapes he could say, "*Now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me.*" Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him...*Rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.*" (Deuteronomy 26:10f NIV84) Our Lord Jesus Himself promises: "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:5 NIV84) **The Creator** wants to give all good gifts because...

✠ **He is the LORD.** (v.2)

"*Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?*" declares the LORD. See how creation runs through the entire Bible? Who are you going to believe, scientists who make things up, disagree with each other and finally die? Or the eternal God who reveals how things began and where this earth ends? From the very first verse **Tremble at God's Word**. Then you can appreciate how the rest of the Bible has no contradictions or errors. Whenever I discuss this with anyone or check out scholarly claims of Bible "errors," it always comes down to something the Bible says, but they just refuse to believe. For instance, the virgin birth of Christ. No one can explain how this could happen besides what the Holy Spirit tells us. The Bible says what it says. The only question is do you believe it? "*No one comes to the Father except through me.*" (John 14:6) Could Christ be more clear? Could the Holy Spirit be more precise over sixteen centuries, three continents, forty writers in three different languages? Sure we don't understand how everything fits together. But the problem is always with our lack of understanding, not with the Biblical text as **the LORD** inspired it in the original Hebrew and Greek. The more I study how we got the Bible, the more amazed I am at how lovingly **the LORD** preserves His Word.

Why? Because **He is the LORD** – *the God of free and faithful grace*. He is still "*a consuming fire*" (Hebrews 12:29), but His "*mercy triumphs over judgment.*" (James 2:13) **The LORD** answers to no one because He created everyone. He is so rich in mercy that He saved wretched sinners like you and me. **Tremble at God's Word** and you find out how eager **the LORD** is to comfort you: "*This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.*" **The LORD** gladly creates our hearts new and humble. Marvel at your feeble faith, but marvel more at **the LORD's** rich grace!

Who is **the LORD**? "*The LORD is my Shepherd.*" How does He feel about me? "*The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.*" (Psalm 147:11) In a worship service after the exile all the people were crying as they listened to **God's Word**. His judgment had destroyed Jerusalem. Rebuilding was hard. But governor *Nehemiah said, "This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."* (Nehemiah 8:10 NIV84) That's more than our joy in the LORD. What gives us strength is **the LORD's** joy in us. Not because of what we do or how we feel but all because of God's grace. Does a coach love to turn around a team of misfits? Do parents love it when their children finally respond? Are you happy when your mom and dad notice how hard you're trying? Infinitely more **the LORD** loves to bless the undeserving, to help the helpless. Look at the cross; so loves **the LORD**. He forgives all our sins. Look at the empty tomb; so great is God's love! He declares us to be guilt free! **The Creator** says, "*Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.*" (Isaiah 65:17–19 NIV84) **Tremble at God's Word** today. The best is yet to be. Amen.