

My Soul Thirsts For You A Christian Primer On Worship

By

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Chapter One

Worshiping All Of Him - With All Of Me

Jesus was asked many questions during the days and months He taught His disciples on earth. Those questions helped lay the foundation for how we are to follow Christ our Lord and Savior.

One of the most important questions dealt with which point of the Mosaic Law was most important (first). Jesus answered, *“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.”* (Mark 12:29-30).

Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Jews recited these verses daily. Every scribe carried the verses on a miniature roll in his phylactery (small case of parchment bound to the forehead or arm). Here’s why:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9

The scribes of Israel took the Scripture literally and tied them as symbols on their hands and bound them on their foreheads. It’s interesting that the person who asked the question of Jesus was a scribe. He carried the answer to his question on his body. Jesus may have even pointed to the scribe’s phylactery as He answered the question. The Lord was always pointing the religious leaders of Israel to the spiritual meaning of God’s Word. The scribes and Pharisees were big on the “outward” demonstration of obedience to God, but negligent on the more important “inward” obedience.

Jesus chose a specific word to describe the love and devotion believers should have for God: *agapao*. We Christians know this is the word used for the love that comes to us from the Spirit of God. God gives us the love we need to love Him with the proper depth of affection and gratitude.

“Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.” We need to understand and accept that the Lord is One. He is the Mighty God of Heaven and there is no other like Him. He is the Creator God. There is no being that compares with the Lord God (*kurios theos* – “one who has power over another, master, owner” — God – from the Hebrew *Elohim* and *Jehovah*).

Notice how deep our love should go for God:

1. with all your heart
2. with all your soul
3. with all your mind
4. with all your strength

God instructed Israel to love Him with their entire being. Each of these words in Hebrew and Greek (heart, soul, mind, strength) cover the total perspective of being a human being. That is how much we are commanded to love God.

That kind of love leads naturally to deep devotion and worship. Jesus is presenting us with a challenge to love Him more than we love ourselves; to love Him more than we love anyone else in life; to love Him more than we love things.

The Bible is filled with amazing examples of people who worshiped God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. We'll look at some of them this week with the purpose of deepening our understanding of worship. Let's begin with Israel's great King David. Look at the depth of his love and devotion to God.

“O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your

lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Because You have been my help, Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me. But those who seek my life, to destroy it, Shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword; They shall be a portion for jackals. But the king shall rejoice in God; Everyone who swears by Him shall glory; But the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.” Psalm 63

King David is pouring out his heart to God and sharing his deep love for Him. Remember that David wrote this song when he was in the wilderness of Judah. David and his soldiers had just saved the city of Keilah from the Philistines. David asked God if he should attack the Philistines and God told him to attack and save Keilah. David’s soldiers doubted they could win, so David went back to the Lord and asked Him again. God told David to go to Keilah, *“For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.”* David and his men defeated the Philistines and took away their livestock. However, King Saul heard about where David was and believed God had delivered David into his hand to be killed. Saul planned to surround Keilah and destroy it to get to David. David inquired of the Lord and God told David that the people of Keilah would deliver David to Saul to save their city. So, David took 600 of his men into the Wilderness of Ziph and hid from Saul in the mountain forests. King Saul tried to find David to kill him, but God protected David and his men. Saul and his soldiers came very close to encircling David and his men in the Wilderness of Maon, but a messenger brought Saul a message that the Philistines had invaded his kingdom. Saul had to abandon his plans to kill David to fight against the invading Philistines. Then David went to the strongholds of En Gedi.

David wrote many of his great songs (Psalms) when he was in desperate situations. Those hard times drew him closer to God. The same is true for us. Some of our deepest spiritual worship comes during some of the darkest moments of life. God teaches us so much.

When life hits you square in the face and you feel as if no one cares, we remember that God always cares for us. It is during those moments that we find our soul thirsty for God. We, like David, want to see His Power and Glory. Because His Lovingkindness is better than life itself, our lips praise Him. Our mouth will praise Him with joyful lips. We meditate on Christ in the darkness of the night watches. We rejoice because God is our help in times of trouble. Our soul follows close behind Him, even as Jesus upholds us. We know what the future holds for those who oppose us. We know what our future will be with Christ our King.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we love you! We worship you!

Chapter Two

The Meaning of Worship

What does it mean to worship God? The word “worship” is used almost 200 times in the Bible. Let’s go to the Hebrew and Greek to see what words God chose to use when He inspired the writing of His Word.

Hebrew

1. *shahah* — depress, bow down, prostrate
2. *hawah* — bow down, pay adoration
3. *abhadh* — serve, work, labor

Greek

1. *proskuneo* — kiss forward, make obeisance, do reverence to
2. *sebomai* – to revere with devotion
3. *sebazomai* – honor religiously
4. *latreuo* — to serve, render homage
5. *eusebeo* — act piously toward
6. *sebasma* — an object of worship
7. *ethelothrekseia* — to will worship
8. *threskeia* — external religion, religious worship, ceremonial worship

The ancients would demonstrate devotion by bowing their heads to the ground while kissing and pushing their hands forward above their heads. It was the idea of “kissing forward” and was a demonstration of devotion and obedience. Here are some examples of the use of “worship” of God in the Old Testament.

“And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.” Genesis 22:5

“Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD.” Genesis 24:26

“And I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth to take the daughter of my master’s brother for his son.” Genesis 24:48

“So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.” Exodus 4:31

“And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ that you shall say, ‘It *is* the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.’ So the people bowed their heads and worshiped. Then the children of Israel went away and did so; just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.” Exodus 12:26-28

“All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing *at* the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man *in* his tent door.” Exodus 33:10

“But you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God).” Exodus 24:13-15

“Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her.” 1 Samuel 1:19

“Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD.” 1 Samuel 15:25

“So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of

the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate.” 2 Samuel 12:20

“And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD.” 2 Chronicles 20:18

“Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.” 2 Chronicles 29:30

“And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground.” Nehemiah 8:6

“And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God *for one-fourth* of the day; and *for another* fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God.” Nehemiah 9:3

“You alone *are* the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.” Nehemiah 9:6

“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.” Job 1:20

“But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.” Psalm 5:7

“Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.” Psalm 29:2

“All the earth shall worship You And sing praises to You; They shall sing praises *to* Your name.’ Selah” Psalm 66:4

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.” Psalm 95:6

“Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.” Psalm 96:9

“Exalt the LORD our God, And worship at His footstool— He *is* holy.” Psalm 99:5

“Thus says the LORD, The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, To Him whom man despises, To Him whom the nation abhors, To the Servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship, Because of the LORD who is faithful, The Holy One of Israel; And He has chosen You.” Isaiah 49:7

What do we learn about worship from these and other verses in the Old Testament? Worship is the correct and proper response to God’s commands and provision. The Lord God created the heavens and the earth. He **deserves** our worship. The Lord God is above all gods. He **demand**s our worship. The Lord God is holy. He is **worthy** of our worship.

Worship became even more personal in the New Testament when the Son of God stepped from Heaven to earth and became as one of us. Notice in the early part of Matthew’s Gospel that Gentiles from the East knew that the Child they searched for deserved their worship. Also notice how Satan desired worship from the Son of God and how Jesus used Old Testament truth to teach Satan about the priorities of worship.

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.’” Matthew 2:1-2

“And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Matthew 2:11

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Matthew 4:10

Other people who met Jesus also had the spiritual sense to know that He was worthy of worship and adoration. Knowing Jesus should have that effect on us. Here’s insight into worship from the Synoptic Gospels.

“And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Matthew 8:2

“While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.” Matthew 9:18

“Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.” Matthew 14:33

“Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!” Matthew 15:25

“And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.” Matthew 28:9

“When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him.” Mark 5:6

“Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” Luke 24:51-53

John’s Gospel gives us unique insights into the meaning of worship.

“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we

know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” John 4:21-23

The people living during the time of Christ, even as the present time, are confused and misled about the meaning of worship. True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, *“for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.”* That’s a clue. God is looking for people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. That is a unique combination: in spirit and in truth.

God created us for the purpose of personal fellowship. That relationship is based on God loving us, and our loving, adoring and worshipping Him in return. God provides the fertile soil for our worship. He made us spiritual beings so we could have a deep relationship with Him. He gave us the Holy Spirit to **convict** us of the sin that separates us from God, **comfort** us with His **compassion** when we repent of our sins and receive Christ as our Savior and Lord, and **connect** us to our Heavenly Father so we can **commune** with Him. That’s worshipping God in spirit and in truth. God provides both. We respond thankfully and emotionally with our worship.

Worship is personal and emotional. Study the word “worship” throughout Scripture and you’ll find people who felt deep emotions as they worshiped. They may have experienced great joy, deep sadness or great fear, but God’s Love and Grace met their every need and their heart-felt and emotional response was to worship God. They often fell down and worshiped God. They bowed their heads toward the earth. They cried, they sang, they lifted their hands to Heaven, they danced before the Lord. So many emotions. Such a deep, personal thing it is to worship the Living God.

Chapter Three

Worship is Personal and Corporate

Worship is fun! I mean that, seriously. It is fun. Some of the best times I've ever had in my Christian life have happened during worship. I have laughed, cried and felt a wide range of emotions during worship. That goes for **personal** and **corporate** worship.

Personal Worship

This is between me and God. It's my private time with the Lord of Heaven. Personal worship is about love and hope, devotion and great joy. The Bible gives us so many examples of believers praying, singing, rejoicing, and enjoying their time with God. People bow before Him. They express their love for Him. They shower Him with adulation and praise.

One of the most beautiful stories about personal worship is in Genesis 22. It's the story of Abraham and Isaac, a father and his only son. God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice and Abraham went up into the mountain to "worship" God. It is also a beautiful picture of the love God has for the world and how He provided the ultimate Sacrifice: His Only Son. Look as Abraham laid the wood of the sacrifice on Isaac's shoulders, even as God would later lay the wood of the Sacrifice on the shoulders of Jesus, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. Note also that the mountain where this happened was in the "land of Moriah." According to 2 Chronicles 3:1, Mount Moriah is where King Solomon built the Temple of the Lord. It's where the Lord appeared to his father David, "at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." Mount Moriah is an elongated ridge and may have also been the location of Christ's crucifixion. Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives are nearby. How appropriate that the mountain God told Abraham to take Isaac to sacrifice would later be the place of both the worship of God by Israel and the Sacrifice of the Son of God on the Cross. What significance this place has for personal worship.

“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.’ So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ Then he said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ So he said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.’ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him was* a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day, ‘In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’ Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I

will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.”

Corporate Worship

Mount Moriah is also the location of Solomon’s Temple, also known as the Holy Temple (Hebrew – *Beit HaMikdash* – House of the Holy). The corporate worship of Israel began in the desert between Egypt and the Promised Land as the people of God followed Moses and the Cloud of God. Their worship developed further in the Tabernacle as they worshiped God through sacrifice and obedience to God’s Law. Hundreds of years later God directed King Solomon in the building of the permanent structure of holy worship known as the Holy Temple.

Corporate worship has always been important to God and His people. It’s about God’s chosen standing, kneeling, bowing and lying prostrate together in heart-felt agreement about the Greatness and Holiness of God. It was a place of gladness and rejoicing for the provision and protection of God.

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD.’ Our feet have been standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is built As a city that is compact together, Where the tribes go up, The tribes of the LORD, To the Testimony of Israel, To give thanks to the name of the LORD. For thrones are set there for judgment, The thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces.’ For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, ‘Peace *be* within you.’ Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.” Psalm 122

The Lord did not allow David to build His Temple, but gave that work to David's son, Solomon. Look at the deep burden Solomon had for a sanctified place to worship the Almighty Creator of the Universe.

“Then Solomon sent to Hiram king of Tyre, saying: As you have dealt with David my father, and sent him cedars to build himself a house to dwell in, *so deal with me*. Behold, I am building a temple for the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate *it* to Him, to burn before Him sweet incense, for the continual showbread, for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths, on the New Moons, and on the set feasts of the LORD our God. This *is an ordinance* forever to Israel. And the temple which I build *will be* great, for our God is greater than all gods.” 2 Chronicles 2:3-5

One of the saddest experiences in the history of God's people was the destruction of the Holy Temple. How heartbreaking that must have been for those who were taken into captivity. Their center of corporate worship was gone. They could still worship God privately, but having the Holy Temple was so important to them and their faith.

One of the happiest experiences in the history of God's people was the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. How encouraging that must have been for those who returned from captivity to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. Their center of corporate worship was restored. They could worship God privately and corporately. It was a happy day!

The Holy Temple of God was destroyed again in 70 A.D. when the Roman Army under the leadership of General Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian, ransacked Jerusalem and tore down the Temple. This was just one generation after Israel rejected Jesus as the Messiah and demanded that Rome kill Him on a Cross. Jesus rose from the dead and gave Israel more opportunities to accept Him as their King, but they refused and killed Christ's followers. God responded by turning to the Gentiles and offering them salvation. That is the condition Jews and Gentiles find themselves in to this day.

Corporate worship today occurs in hundreds of thousands of Christian assemblies around the world. Millions of God's people come

together on Sundays and many other days of the week to worship together and praise God for all that He does for all of us.

God has not left His people wondering how they should worship Him corporately. The Lord has given us specific instructions about what pleases Him. It is of utmost importance that we obey His Word.

Here's what Paul wrote to the Corinthians about corporate worship.

“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church. Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached? If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.” 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Corporate worship is a time for God's people to express their love for God and each other through their spiritual gifts. It's interesting that God first informed the Corinthians about the proper **spiritual conduct** for the Lord's Supper in Chapter 11, the proper use of **spiritual gifts** in Chapter 12, the proper use of **spiritual love** in

Chapter 13, and the proper use of **spiritual worship** in Chapter 14. Look at the main points of each chapter:

“In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!” 1 Corinthians 11:17-22

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

“What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed

and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored. Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

May it be as God commands in the Church. May we be one in spirit and in truth. May our **private worship** and our **corporate worship** be a blessing to God and to others.

Chapter Four

Worship — Here and There — Forever

Love and Worship go hand in hand. God Loved us before He created the world. He created us with the innate ability to return His Love. That love for God is Worship. We know from the beginning relationship of God and man that obedience is vital to Worship. *“Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man...”* (Genesis 2:15-16) Worship has never been about what we want to do; it’s always been about what God wants us to do. **Obedience and Worship** go hand in hand. We cannot have one without the other.

Worship is an important part of the **fabric of faith** in God. We worship God because He is **worthy** of our worship. We worship God because we **trust** Him. We worship God because He has **done everything** for us. He has saved us from the penalty of sin and provided us with eternal life. We love God because He **first loved us**.

This week we’ve looked at **personal** and **corporate Worship**. We’ve seen Worship through the eyes of God and His people. We’ve watched as the faithful through the centuries bowed their heads, lowered their bodies to the ground and praised God’s Holy Name. Worship is a **top priority** in a believer’s life. Jesus says it should be **priority #1**.

“Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.’ He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.’” Mark 7:5-9

Remember that obedience is **vital** to the Worship of God. The Pharisees and scribes were among the most religious people in Israel, but they worshiped God in vain because they *“rejected the commandment of God”* so they could keep their human traditions. They actually taught *“as doctrines the commandments of men.”*

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:20-24

The woman from Samaria had been raised with a narrow and incorrect view about worshiping God. The Samaritans came from a long line of people who had populated the land once belonging to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Kingdom fell to invaders in the late 8th Century B.C. and many of the children of Israel living there were taken into captivity and to other countries. The invaders brought people from many other nations to repopulate the land of Israel. Samaritans of Jesus’ time included remnants of the northern tribes of Israel along with descendants from Gentile nations. Jews did not like them. Samaritans did not like Jews. They disagreed about how to worship and where to worship God. Jesus had compassion on the people of Samaria and went right to the heart of their view of worship: *“You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.”*

True Worship of God is far more than nationality, religious background or location. True Worship is about the heart, the mind and the will. True worshipers will worship God in spirit and truth.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”
Matthew 6:24

We have to make a choice. We cannot serve two masters because that will lead us to hate the one and love the other. We will be loyal to the one and despise the other. We cannot serve God and

Fill in the blank. Jesus was speaking to people in the context of money. It's also true about anything else that could master you. It might be love of another human. It might be personal fame. Anything that could master you is something that can keep you from worshipping God.

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” Matthew 10:36-38

“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” Matthew 22:37

“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” Luke 11:42

Jesus closed the door on approving any kind of relationship with God that does not include **devotion**. Love and adoration and devotion lead naturally to a desire to worship and praise God.

Christians love the **complete story** of God's Love for them. Our relationship with Jesus Christ does not end at our death. In fact, our physical death opens the door to the most intimate of love relationship with Jesus. We enter into His Presence at our death!

What happened to Adam and Eve immediately after they sinned against God? They sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness and they hid themselves from the “presence of the Lord God.” (Genesis 3:7-8) What did God do? He “drove out the man” from the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:24) Human beings were removed from the Presence of God. What have human beings tried to do ever since that terrible day? Find their way back into His Presence.

I wrote extensively about this in my book “A History of Man’s Quest For Immortality” (Fifth Estate Publishing, 2007). For thousands of years, the human race has tried every imaginable way to regain their lost immortality and standing in the Presence of God. God blessed the people of Israel with the amazing privilege of His Presence. He appeared to them as a Cloud and Fire. He inhabited the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Temple. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, walked among men and women, boys and girls, and made His Presence known in powerful and unforgettable ways. It is through Jesus Christ that Jews and Gentiles can know God and actually have His Spirit live inside them!

That brings us to our **future**. We know that when we die we will enter into the **Presence of God**. Paul wrote to the Corinthians believers that to be **absent** from the body (death) is to be **present** with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). It sounds strange to non-believers for us to say that to be absent is to be present, and to be present is to be absent, but it’s true. We can’t experience complete **presence** with God unless we also experience complete absence from our earthly bodies. Paul wrote extensively about that in his first letter to the Corinthians. I invite you to read all of Chapter 15, but here’s a small portion that addresses this idea of absent from the body and present with the Lord. The secret is the fact that God will give us a new body that is immortal, unlike the mortal body we have now.

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is

one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." 1 Corinthians 15:35-45

We also know from Paul's letters that there will be a time in the future when some Christians will be present with the Lord without experiencing physical death. We don't know the day or hour, but we do know it's coming.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Paul gave us more details about this amazing experience in his first letter to the Thessalonian believers.

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are

alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

This is wonderful! Whether we die first or are alive when Jesus returns for His own, we will go into the Presence of the Lord forever. So, what happens to Worship when we're in Heaven? Will we sit on clouds strumming on harps as many in the world believe? No. Our lives will be rich and full and busy and fruitful. We will Worship God in His Very Presence. We will rule and judge nations. We will experience all that God intended for us when He created Adam, plus more because we will have our Savior and Lord with us for eternity!

Jesus was always Lord, but He became our Savior on that special Day when He shed His precious Blood and died on the Cross in the ancient city of Jerusalem. That Day almost 2,000 years ago expanded the Worship of God in Heaven to new heights. The first Heavenly Song we hear in the Book of Revelation is an old Song that has been sung for thousands of years: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8b) “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.” (Revelation 4:11) The next Song we hear in Heaven is a **new Song**:

“And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.’” Revelation 5:9-10

Our Worship of God kicks into high gear when we come into His Presence. We will sing the old song and the new song of praise to our Risen Lord. We will be standing among the millions of angels and

hundreds of millions of redeemed saints when we all worship Him together:

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!’ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.”
Revelation 5:11-14

And we say with them — Amen and Amen!

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