

MISUNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING WORSHIP

Sermon by Mark S. Aites

(Special thanks to Gary Workman for the material)

TEXTS: JOHN 4:20-24; ROM. 12:1-2

INTRODUCTION:

1. Worship is a wonderful subject to study, but it is certainly not without its misunderstandings.
2. In **John 4**, Jesus encountered the woman at the well.
 - 1) In **vs 20**, she pointed out the long standing disagreement between the Samaritans and the Jews.
 - 2) **Note vs 20-24**
3. This particular passage has been misunderstood, and with some has served as a catalyst to teach the notion that everything we do in life is worship.
4. As Gary Workman stated it so well: "Some conclude from this that Jesus revolutionized the entire nature of worship, that it does not occur at a specific time or place as under the Old Covenant but rather encompasses one's total life and relationship to God."
5. He further observes: "There are those who have even gone so far as to say that incidental actions in our daily lives are worship; brushing our teeth, taking a bath, tying one's shoelaces, playing a ball game, and the like."
6. If one is careful to observe, the only thing which Jesus mentioned as being new was the ending of worship in a specified place.
7. When the old law was nailed to the cross (**Col. 2:14**); it did not change the essence or nature of worship.
8. Someone might say, "Well, wasn't worship under the old covenant just a series of rituals with animal sacrifices?"
 - 1) Should we assume that God cared nothing about whether one was sincere in heart who offered those sacrifices?
 - 2) Should we assume that God cared nothing about whether things were done in truth?
 - 3) Worshipping God in spirit and in truth is nothing new.
 - 4) Nothing has changed regarding the nature of worship.
9. Because of the misunderstandings that have developed, and in particular this notion of everything being worship, we have need first to give a definition of worship.

DISCUSSION:

I. DEFINITION.

- A. One of the reasons that worship has been misunderstood is because men fail to observe the original Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic words.
- B. As a result, men have had difficulty distinguishing between worship and service.
- C. Of the various original words, we take for example one Hebrew word which means to, "bow down," to "prostrate oneself."
 1. This particular term was used in discussion with Israel, that they were not to

- worship* other gods (**Exod. 34:14**).
2. The same term is used again in warning them not to “bow down” to these gods (**Exod. 20:5**)
- D. Another Hebrew and Aramaic term that is used means to “prostrate oneself in worship.”
1. Isaiah is the only book to contain the Hebrew word; and Daniel its Aramaic form.
 2. This word is very similar to the previous one.
- E. Turning to the Greek, we encounter 3 terms, the first a commonly used term which literally means, “to kiss toward.”
1. Bro. Workman notes: “This word sprang from the fact that in ancient times the worshipper would kiss the hand or feet of the object of his devotion, or possibly kiss the ground before him.”
 2. He also notes: “Some ancients were known to have thrown a kiss to their deity.”
 3. It is a word which refers to an act of veneration; and is the same word which Jesus used in His reply to satan (**cf. Matt. 4:10**).
- F. The second of the Greek terms is similar to the concept in the O.T. of fearing God.
1. It means more than just to honour or reverence God.
 2. It is that which causes one to take action in response to Him.
- G. The third of these “denotes an act of reverence, whether paid to the creature, or Creator (Note **Col. 2:18**).
- H. All of these terms are descriptive not of a continuous manner of life, but an act of homage, veneration, or adoration.

II. DISTINCTION.

- A. “One of the mistakes found so often in the writings of men on the subject of worship is to assume that anything done in the O.T. tabernacle or temple must have been worship. And since the present-day temple is the church rather than a physical building, it is assumed that everything we do, or at least everything we do for the Lord, must be worship.” (Ibid.)
- B. Scripture informs us that the priests and the Levites served in the tabernacle (Note **Num. 16:9**).
1. We observe carefully that the charge is to *serve* the people and obviously not to worship them.
 3. The Hebrew of this word, and even in the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, always translate this word with the idea of service, and not worship.
- C. There are other terms as well, which clearly make a distinction between service and worship.
- D. Consider some biblical examples:
1. Again noting satan’s rebuke (**Matt. 4:10**).
 2. Paul went to Jerusalem to *worship* (**Acts 24:11**); but later noted that he was

servicing God night and day (**Acts 26:7**).

3. **Rom.1:25**

- E. Please observe that in each of these examples, there is a clear cut distinction between worship and service. (There are 20 other Old Testament passages that we could use as well!)
- F. The stumbling stone, so to speak, for much of this misunderstanding over worship comes from **Rom. 12:1**.
 - 1. Some have translated one of the Greek terms for service as *worship* in this passage.
 - 2. In the examples I cited just a moment ago, relative to a distinction between worship and service; I used passages which use the very same Greek word which Paul did in **Rom. 12:1**.
 - 3. In the three examples I gave, every time it was translated as service.
 - 4. And also of interest, when the Greek translation of the Old Testament was written, it is the same term used of the priests and Levites serving the people (**cf. Num. 16:9**).
- G. Consider the context of **Rom. 12:1**.
 - 1. It actually stems from a discussion all the way back in **Rom. 6**.
 - 2. Paul was concerned for them because they were apparently inclined "to continue in sin" (**Rom. 6:1**).
 - 3. In **6:13** he instructed them to yield themselves to the Lord.
 - 4. In **Rom. 12:1** he is beseeching them again to yield themselves.
 - 5. Some translations use the phrase, "*spiritual service*," of which the word *spiritual* does not appear in the Greek.
 - 6. The Greek is talking of a service that is reasonable.
 - 7. And bro. Workman expressed it: "Having once been truly converted, we can continue to offer service (the same Greek word for service again) that is "well pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (**Heb. 12:28**)."
- H. He also notes: "To define all service as worship is to blunt the significance of those special activities which the Bible calls worship. Moreover, it would pave the way for incorporating instrumental music or any other unauthorized element into our worship on the supposition that secular use of an instrument (along with everything else we do) is worship, too."

III. DESCRIPTION.

- A. Part of the basis for the belief that worship is an ongoing process is because they fail to recognize that worship requires specific action.
- B. For example, when they approached Mt. Moriah, Abraham requested of his servants that they remain where they were (**Gen. 22:5; cf. Judg. 7:15** We note that after he worshipped, he returned to the camp.)
- D. Note also **1 Sam. 1:19; 2 Sam. 12:20**
- E. In describing worship we must also be cautious as some have spoken of "the attitude of worship."
 - 1. But over and over in scripture God provides us with an understanding of the

- specific nature of worship.
2. "People bowed down, or bowed their heads, or fell on their faces and worshipped." (Ibid.)
 3. And each time this was done, it was done in humility and reverence.
 4. It clearly was separate and apart from the normal life of service to God.
 5. "All worship is service, but not all service is worship." (Ibid.)
- G. The examples in the New Testament are not those of on-going worship.
1. In **Acts 20:7** the disciples assembled to partake in the Lord's Supper.
 2. In **1 Cor. 16:1-2** the Corinthians, along with the churches of Galatia, were instructed to give upon the first day of the week.
- H. It may surprise some to note that the expressions, "come to worship," and "go to worship" are found in scripture (**Isa. 66:23; Zech. 14:16**).
1. The Ethiopian "*had come to Jerusalem to worship*" (**Acts 8:27**).
 2. Paul "*went up to worship at Jerusalem*" (**Acts 24:11**).
 3. If in fact worship is an on going thing, why then did the Holy Spirit tell us that he went up to worship at Jerusalem. Why not just say, "Paul went to Jerusalem?"
 4. Worship is clearly separate and apart from daily service.
- I. The means by which we worship God today are through singing, praying, giving, the Lord's Supper, and preaching.
1. But these are not things which we continue to do every waking moment.
 2. True, we pray without ceasing in that we are always of an attitude of mind that we can go to God in prayer (**1 Thess. 5:17**).
 3. But we don't pray non-stop; we don't sing non-stop.
 4. Are we worshipping then in casual conversation? No.
 5. Are we worshipping while we are eating a meal? No.
 6. Are we worshipping while we are brushing ourteeth? No.
- J. Remember that Jesus conveyed that worship that is pleasing to God must be *in spirit and in truth* (**John 4:24**).
1. It therefore must involve the inner person.
 2. "If we worship rightly, we 'worship by the Spirit of God' (**Phil. 3:3**). It takes the mind's attention and the heart's affection (**Matt. 15:8-9**). By so doing, we offer up 'spiritual sacrifices' (**1 Pet. 2:5**)." (Ibid.)

CONCLUSION:

1. Worship is something which is wonderful, and a treasured blessing by every child of God.
2. A way in which we can honor and show our heartfelt love and adoration to the living God.
3. But it stands to reason, that if worship must be in spirit and in truth; then one's life must be in harmony with God's will to be able to offer acceptable worship.
4. One cannot draw near to God without Christ; one cannot draw near to God while yet lost in their sins
5. Are you lost in your sins?