



True Biblical Worship

November 23, 2003

By Rev. David Koch

Introduction:

Last week we looked at “Why Worship”. This morning we want to continue our discussion of this topic.

True biblical worship so satisfies our total personality that we don’t have to shop around for man-made substitutes. William Temple made this clear in his masterful definition of worship:

For worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose – and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.

[Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Integrity Crisis*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991, p. 119.](#)

Let’s review what we shared last week:

Jesus had a conversation with a Samaritan woman. In that conversation, Jesus indicated that worship is not about a place. True worship is something that is a response toward Almighty God. In fact God is seeking for those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. God is Spirit and that is the means by which true worship happens. True worship is all about Him.

We begin by examining what Paul has to say in Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual act of worship.

I. The appeal for worship

Paul begins by appealing to the believers at Rome along these lines through the mercy of God. We can only appreciate that appeal when it is set in front of a backdrop of the Jewish laws. The law said, “Thou shalt not”, and “Thou shalt.” It announced penalties for disobedience that amounted in some cases in death. It was essentially an instrument of compulsion. It was dictatorial and became the means for people to be legalistic in their thinking. Its power was based on

threats and promises, treating men and women as children. AND IT FAILED.

At times it produced submission and conformity, but it did not reach the heart because it did not appeal to the heart. It never overcame sin, and so the entire story of its working is proven throughout history that we can not be made pure by legal enactments. Sin, which is our enemy, can never be overcome by the law.

The appeal which follows has the word sacrifice in it. We need not look at this as something negative, but as *putting our body at the disposal of God for His place of dwelling and use*. This is a word picture that is taken from bringing sacrifices to the altar of God. The person who brought the offering, brought the choicest of flock, and brought it to the altar and presented it there as an atonement for their sin.

The appeal conveys the thought of complete and total devotion to the Lord and no part of the life or sacrifice is to be used for any other purpose. Paul refers to this as a living sacrifice. The Jewish people knew very well the idea of sacrifice and it was living and the life was taken from it in the sacrifice. All the phrases that Paul uses here indicate a total surrender to God which includes mind, body, spirit, the entire being as the property of his maker.

This is your reasonable service. Nothing can be more reasonable than for creation to being glory to the creator. This offering is reasonable, not extreme, not something that would be unusual or beyond what could or should be expected, and this becomes our spiritual act of worship.

II. Purpose for sacrifice

There was a purpose for sacrifice in the scriptures. The language and idea of sacrifice pervade the entire Bible. The offering up of sacrifices is to be regarded as a divine institution. It did not originate with man. God himself appointed it as the mode in which acceptable worship was to be offered to him by guilty man.

Sacrifices have been offered to God from the beginning of time. The Lord clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of animals, which most likely had been offered in sacrifice (Genesis 3:21). Abel offered a sacrifice "of the firstlings of his flock" (Genesis 4:4; Hebrews 11:4). A distinction also was made between clean and unclean animals, which there is every reason to believe had reference to the offering up of sacrifices (Genesis 7:2, 8), because animals were not given to man as food until after the Flood.

The same practice of sacrificing continued throughout the age of the patriarchs (Genesis 8:20; Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:4, 18; Genesis 15:9-11; Genesis 22:1-18, etc.). There were definite laws that were dictated by God during the leadership of Moses, regarding the different kinds of sacrifices that were to

be offered and the manner in which the offering was to be made. The offering of stated sacrifices became indeed a prominent and distinctive feature of the whole period (Exodus 12:3-27; Leviticus 23:5-8; Numbers 9:2-14).

III. Perfect sacrifice – Jesus Christ

Now we come to the New Testament and we see that through the work of Jesus Christ, there is no longer any need for the continued shedding of blood. Jesus paid it all. When we accept His sacrifice as the means for our atonement with God, there is a spiritual union that takes place between us and God. God sees us justified – brought in line with the original specifications of His creation, without sin.

Psalm 29:2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

IV. Holiness a part of worship

I find it interesting that the holiness of God is stamped all over the idea of true worship. At the moment of new birth, our body becomes a temple or a vessel for God's spirit to live in. From that time on true worship should be always taking place in that life.

1 Cor. 6:19-20 – Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

1 Peter 2:9 – But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

In the Old Testament, the sanctuary was a holy place. The sacrifices that were offered in that place were holy. The altar was holy, the persons offering the sacrifices were holy, the vessels used in sacrifice were holy, and the garments worn by the priests were holy. Everything about service to the Lord was holy.

To be holy and spiritual in our worship then involves every aspect of our life. Our body, mind, and spirit belong to God, and everything that is a part of that is holy unto the Lord.

There are many other tremendous scripture references in the Word that deal with this whole topic of worship. From the book of Revelation, we get a glimpse through the vision that John had of the worship that takes place in heaven.

V. Pattern of worship in Heaven

All earthly worship should be inspired by the worship that is already going on in heaven and that we will experience more fully when Christ comes again. In this sense our present worship is like “playing heaven,” as when little children invite each other to “play house,” looking forward to the day when they are grown up and have their own home. So in our worship now we are anticipating the joy of the final redemption of matter and time in one continuous, everyday life expression of joy and pleasure in God.

Worship in Heaven will not be dull and stereotyped (playing the same old songs on our harps sitting on gold streets) worship in heaven is exquisitely beautiful, continuously spontaneous and totally enjoyable. The picture given to us in Rev. 21-22 has several characteristics that can inspire our worship now.

The worship is responsive. It is caused by God and God’s actions rather than “worked up” by human effort. God awakens a desire for worship (Rev. 3:20; Rev. 5:2) in the same way he awakened a desire in Adam for a wife.

The worship is reverent. It is God-pleasing and for God’s benefit; it is inspired by the mercy of God and directed to the pleasure of God. The alternatives promoted today – relational, charismatic or contemplative worship – focus on what we get out of corporate worship. But the royal priesthood (Rev. 1:6; Rev. 5:10) is focused on blessing God.

Conclusion:

True biblical worship so satisfies our total personality that we don’t have to shop around for man-made substitutes. William Temple made this clear in his masterful definition of worship:

For worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose – and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.

Warren W. Wiersbe, The Integrity Crisis, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991, p. 119.

The worship is inclusive. Revelation gives us a picture of all nations, tribes and peoples together worshipping God. The synergism of this is far more than the sum of individual privatized worship.

The worship is intelligent. The mind is engaged fully in heaven. Worship is not a “touchy-feely” affair but reflects (as does John himself) on the great themes of God as Creator and Redeemer (Rev. 4-5). Worship is evoked by the qualities and actions of God: power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, blessing and sovereignty (Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:11, 13; Rev. 7:12; Rev. 19:1).

The worship is theological. Revelation is a Christ centered commentary on the whole Old Testament explaining how Christ is the goal toward which the whole drama has been moving. This great theological theme provides the framework for the dominant mood of the book: worship. The original covenant reaches its consummation in the marriage supper of the Lamb, when we commune with Christ forever.

The worship is aesthetic. Worship in heaven appeals to our senses in a spiritual way. There are sounds (trumpets, shouting in a loud voice, silence), motions (falling down prostrate, casting our crowns before the throne), light (rainbows and exquisite emerald), rhythm (antiphonal, sequential and total groupings of praise; Rev. 5:9, 12-13; Rev. 19) and patterns (the encircling throne; Rev. 5:11). Heavenly worship appeals to the sanctified imagination.

The worship is prophetic. It is a balance of awe and intimacy, adoration and access, with respect to God as our destiny and should shape our worship in the here and now. In the same way, our present earthly worship prepares us for life in the heavenly city. Perhaps in some way beyond our imaginations, but hinted in Hebrews 12:22-24, our present worship contributes to the ongoing worship in heaven.