

“WORSHIP – THE ULTIMATE PRIORITY” (Part 3)

Unacceptable Worship (John 4:20-24)

INTRO – We were created by God to worship God. We can begin to do this once we enter into a personal relationship with God by trusting His Son and receiving His Spirit. Worship is our response to all God is, says, and does. Once His child, we should worship Him by paying attention with all we are to all He is, says, and does. REASONS... Above all else, God seeks our worship. He wants it and is worthy of it! He is jealous for it (FUNNY – Speaking of jealous, heard of a wife...).

However, we can't worship Him anyway we choose. There is acceptable and unacceptable worship. Acceptable worship is offered through the Son, by the Spirit, from the heart, and upon the truth. It exhibits (Heb. 10:22) . . . What about deviant worship? When our worship is wrong, He will not accept it. In John 4 Jesus was clear on two points concerning worship: WHO is the OBJECT of our worship? The Father. WHAT is the METHOD of our worship? In spirit and in truth. Note connection to first two commandments (Exo. 20:3-6). Commandment #1 tells us we are to worship the right God. Commandment #2 tells how to worship the right God in the right way. Therefore, whenever our object (WHO) or method (HOW) is wrong, then our worship becomes unacceptable. Worship is false and unacceptable when it is offered to the:

I. **WRONG OBJECT**

- A. Recall worship occurs when we give honor or worth to something. When we give excessive attention to someone or something other than God the Father, the Bible has a name for this – IDOLATRY occurs when we worship the wrong object and when we invent a substitute god. An *idol* is anything (anyone) - not always sinful in itself – that controls our thoughts and actions and thus lessens our commitment to follow Christ.
- B. **WRONG OBJECTS OF WORSHIP** (false gods) come in many forms. Listen carefully and see if you worship any of these:
 - 1. *Possessions* – Materialism can be an idol. FUNNY on cheapskate at fair... We can worship the god of covetousness and money (Job 31:24-25, 28). Listen to Jesus (Matt. 6:19-21).
 - 2. *Pleasure* – Some worship out-of-control appetites, esp. in sensual area (ex. – Internet porn, etc.). Private sins can control us. 1 Jn. 2:15-17
 - 3. *People* – spouse, kids, self
 - 4. *Plans*, dreams and careers can be worshiped, too. See James 4:13-16. Some people (Christians included) want to run their own life, control their own life and chart their own course. Most do this not in open rebellion, but in sort of a passive self-reliance. Here's a test: When my plans conflict with God's, do I willingly drop my plans for His? How does God view this self-trust? Jer. 17:5-8...
- C. Unacceptable worship is offered to the wrong object. Only God the Father is deserving and worthy of our total surrender. This is why Paul warns us in 1 Cor. 10:14 and John in 1 Jn. 5:21...

II. *WRONG MANNER* – Scripture contains a number of examples where worship is rejected because it is offered in the wrong manner. Let me suggest five (5) scenarios of being offered in an unacceptable manner and thus rejected by God. Worship is unacceptable when it is offered:

- A. **WITH KNOWN DISOBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD** (self-styled way) – Examine some OT examples:
 - 1. Cain (Gen. 4:1-5) Heb. 11:4; Jude 11
 - 2. Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2) –
 - 3. Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:1-9) –
*All sought to worship the true God, but in a self-styled manner.
- B. **WITH HYPOCRISY** (external formalism only) - Examples:
 - 1. OT (Isa. 1:11-16; Mal. 1: 6-13) – worship can become routine and half-hearted, merely going through the motions.
 - 2. NT Pharisees (Matt. 15:1-9; 23:23-28) – when the heart and emotions are not engaged, worship is non-existent.
- C. **UNFORGIVENESS** (Matt. 5:23-24) – You have offended another Christian (unintentionally or purposefully) and not sought their forgiveness (Matt. 6:12; 18:34). As long as we harbor unconfessed internal sins, outward acts of worship are not acceptable. It's dishonest. Some today wonder why... need to...
- D. **IN SPIRIT WITHOUT TRUTH** (Jn. 4:22a “You Samaritans worship what you do not know”) – This is *Samaritan* worship of uncontrolled emotionalism. Largely mindless and thus meaningless. Their worship was not based on truth. They worshiped a watered-down version of the true God. They did not know who/what they were worshiping.
- E. **IN TRUTH WITHOUT SPIRIT** (Jn. 4:22b) – This was *Jewish* worship that was essentially only intellectual and traditional. Their worship had no heart. If not careful, worship can become only academic and formal. Remember worship is the result of a growing relationship with a person. We don't worship the rituals (singing), we worship the God the rituals point to.

CONC: God repeatedly disciplined those who failed to properly worship Him. God feels strongly about false worship. Have you been worshipping the wrong object? Have you been seeking to worship the right object, but in a wrong way? This is serious – please take to heart!