

True Worship, Part 2

John 4:20-24

2005

We return tonight in our study to the theme of worship. And I would draw your attention to John's gospel again, chapter 4, and I want to read again verses 20 through 24 as the setting for our message. John's gospel, chapter 4 verse 20. The Holy Spirit, writing through John, says: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.'" Now, in that passage there are eight uses of one form or another of the term worship. It is the key passage, I believe, in the New Testament on the subject and we'll be going back to it again and again.

I was reading this afternoon that in the United States alone, churches have about \$80 billion dollars' worth of buildings, \$80 billion dollars' worth of church buildings. I wonder with all of that facility with the intention of worshipping God, how much actual worship occurs. It's important for us to understand what the Bible teaches about worshipping God. Now, this morning we began our study by examining a text in John 4 as a substance and a basis. And then, by moving to a definition. And we said that worship, the term used so frequently in this passage, simply means honor, or homage, or reverence, or adoration, or praise, or respect given to God. A very simple definition. Our Lord instructs here that we must worship God in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. And so, essentially, worship then is giving respect or honor to God. And we are called to that end.

Now, we discussed a little bit about the definition, what that means to lift up our hearts in worship to God. And then, we introduced to you the first major point in our study, the importance of worship. And I want to go back to that point tonight. And we want to talk about the importance of worship. We're going to talk about the object of worship. We're going to talk about the nature, or the essence of worship, and some other things. But to begin with, we must talk about the importance of worship. We have to lay that foundation.

And if you remember this morning, I suggested to you that there are four reasons why worship is essential, four reasons why it is important. Reason number one is because Scripture so repeatedly speaks of worship. It is a major emphasis in Scripture, and I suggested to you several passages. We looked, first of all, at the Ten Commandments and saw that the very first one of those is indicative of worship. We saw that in Matthew 22, where the Lord is asked: what is the first and great commandment? He replies that it is, in effect, worship, loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. We saw that when God ordained a nation and brought them out of Egypt, He set in their midst a tabernacle which was a focal point of worship. When they came into the land,

He gave them a temple which was a focal point of worship. He gave them a system of offerings, which began with one which was centrally emphasizing worship. We saw the facet of angelic worship, the occupation of the seraphim in the sixth chapter of Isaiah being primarily that of worship. And then, we looked into the New Testament and we saw that based on Romans 12:1 and 2 and 1 Peter 2:5, we are called to offer God spiritual worship which is acceptable to Him.

Now, worship is important then, first of all because it is such a major emphasis in Scripture. Then, secondly, and we just got started on this this morning: worship is important because all of time and eternity depends on it. Destiny is determined by worship. Who you worship and what you worship and how you worship is determinative and reflective of your destiny. And we suggested to you that there are only two ways to worship really that will reflect your destiny: one is unacceptable, and the other is acceptable. If Your worship is unacceptable to God, then you will be excluded from His eternal Kingdom. If your worship is acceptable to God, you will be included.

Now, to begin with we began looking at the thought of unacceptable worship, which is a determiner of the destiny of an individual. And I asked you to think with me for a moment through four kinds of unacceptable worship. So, I hope you can keep that outline all in mind. There are four kinds of unacceptable worship. We just talked about one this morning. The first one is the worship of false gods. The Bible is very clear that God does not accept the worship of false gods. God will not accept people into His kingdom, into His eternity, into His presence who worship other deities, whether they are deities of a religious nature or whether they are supernatural idols such as gold, and silver, and power, and prestige, and self. Anyone who worships false gods is excluded from entering into God's presence because that is unacceptable worship. He will not accept that, and thus will not accept the one who offers it.

Now, the second kind of unacceptable worship is where we want to pick up tonight. And that is this: worship is unacceptable when it is the worship of the true God in the wrong way. God will not accept the worship of the false god, and He will not accept the worship of the true God if offered in the wrong way. Worship of the true God is very specifically established in Scripture, and its mode and manner is equally specifically established. God will not accept worship offered to Him that is offered in an unacceptable manner. And an unacceptable manner is to reduce God to an image, to reduce God to a material representation, to reduce God to an idol, or to reduce God to anything that is the result and product of your own thinking. I very often hear people say, "Well, God as I perceive Him to be is such and such, and such and such." And if your definition of God does not square with the Word of God, then your worship is unacceptable even though you may identify it with the true God.

Now, that leads me to a third kind of unacceptable worship. The first one is worshipping a false god, the second one is worshipping the true God in an unacceptable manner, and the third one is worship of the true God in a self-styled manner. Not just reducing Him to an idol, not just reducing Him to an image, but reducing His worship or the activity of His worship to some personal definition.

Now, what do I mean by that? Look back with me in your Bible at Leviticus chapter 10. Now, this records for us a great event. Aaron was the high priest and Aaron had two sons. And they, of course, would be entering into the priesthood. It was a great and wonderful day because this was their ordination day. They had been allowed to accompany Moses to the holy mountain. They had been prepared to be ordained, to function as those who represented God. They had been part of that ordination of the priesthood. This was their first day, really, to be considered as those who would lead in the worship of God. And it says in verse 1: "Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either

of them his censer.” And the censer was that which was filled with incense which was emblematic and symbolic of worship as it rose in its fragrance, as it were, to the nostrils of God it was like their worship pleasing to Him. “They took their censers and put fire therein and put incense thereon and offered strange fire before the Lord which He commanded them not.”

Strange fire. Believe it or not, it may well be true that they were drunk. If you look down at verse 9 there is a warning immediately following that the Lord gives to Aaron which suggests this possibility because He says, “Don’t drink wine or strong drink, thou or thy sons with thee when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation lest ye die.” Now, it may well have been that they got a little bit inebriated and when they went in they began to fool around in there and do things that were not according to God’s law for the priesthood, and it says in verse 2, “There went out fire from the Lord and devoured them and they died.” Kind of a sad way to start your ministry. No start at all. God will not accept self-styled, self-invented modes of worship. We do not worship God on our terms but according to the terms of Scripture.

Then, there are lots of people in our society who think they worship God, and they have some self-invented way to do that. I always think about the lady in New Mexico who baked tortillas, Mrs. Rubio. And the Chicago Tribune recorded the story some years back, and one day she was frying a tortilla, and she took the tortilla out of the pan and she said with a great amount of shock, “It is the face of Jesus.” Because burned on that tortilla were skillet burns that she said looked like Jesus. And so, she was so thrilled she showed it to her husband who agreed that it must be Jesus. And she showed it to her family and they agreed, and a neighbor and she agreed. And she went to her priest to have the tortilla blessed. And the priest, who had not really been accustomed to blessing tortillas, was somewhat reluctant to do so, but nevertheless he did it. And she took the tortilla home and she built an altar in her house. She put the tortilla in glass and put piles of cotton around it so it looked like Jesus floating on a cloud. And within a matter of months, Mrs. Rubio had over 8,000 people come to the shrine of the Jesus of the Tortilla. And everyone unanimously agreed that it looked like Jesus except one reporter who said it looked to him like Leon Spinks. I really don’t know where he was coming from, but that was his viewpoint. And so, she worshipped the tortilla and she wrote her testimony which is recorded in the Chicago Tribune, and said the tortilla had changed her life. And her husband agreed she’d been a more peaceful, happy, submissive wife ever since the tortilla had arrived.

Now, that is a stupid bizarre illustration. Little different honestly, little different than Nadab and Abihu. You don’t worship God taking liberties, doing things your own way. You follow the instruction of Scripture.

In 1 Samuel, let me draw you to chapter 13, and we find in 1 Samuel chapter 13 that Saul the king does a fearful thing. Verse 8 “He tarried seven days according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: and Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.” It was in a battle situation. “And Saul said, ‘Bring here a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings.’ And he offered the burnt offering.” Now, you say, Is that any big deal? It sure is. And verse 10 says: “It came to pass as soon as he had ceased offering the burnt offering, behold Samuel came and Saul went out to meet him, that he might bless him. And Samuel said, ‘What hast thou done?’ And Saul said, ‘Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal and I have not made supplication to the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.’”

Pretty lame excuse. "And Samuel said to Saul, 'Thou hast done foolishly, thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God which He commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart.'" God will be worshipped by one who is after God's own heart. And listen, one who's after God's own heart obeys God's Word. And there wouldn't be anybody in Saul's line ever on that throne. David would step in and take his place.

You do not worship God, even the true God, by reducing Him to some image. And you do not worship Him in some self-styled way. I always think of that illustration in 2 Samuel chapter 6, and I would just call your attention to that for a moment. There are many that we could use. But in 2 Samuel chapter 6, the story of Uzzah and Uzzah was transporting the ark of God, verse 3, in a cart. And Uzzah was a member of a group known as the Kohathites. And the Kohathites were the ones who transported the Ark of the Covenant. And from the time they were small, according to Numbers chapter 4, from the time they were raised, they were raised to know nothing but how to transport the Ark of the Covenant. And it was always to be done without anyone ever touching it. It had big rings on the side, and you slid poles through and carried it on your shoulders, and you never touched it. And that was what a Kohathite was raised to do, was to transport the ark. And Uzzah took the liberty to put it on a new cart, which he never should have done. God will not be handled at the whim of man. He will not be handled in a self-styled, manufactured way that comes out of man's own mind, no matter how good his intentions are. And so, the ark is put on a cart, it should never have been on the cart. And it's being transported. "And as it comes," in verse 6, "to Nachon's threshing floor," which is simply a geographical location, it bounced along and looked like it might fall off so, "Uzzah put his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah and God smote him there for his error; and he died by the ark of God."

He knew better. He had been trained all his life that you do not touch the ark. But, in his own confident way, he thought he could intrude into God's commandments. You cannot worship the true God in a self-styled way. You cannot worship the true God by reducing Him to some material representation. And you must not worship a false god.

Now, this is little different than the New Testament. And if you will look with me at Matthew for a moment, I'll show you chapter 15. This is exactly what the Pharisees did. They tried to worship the true God with their own self-styled system. Not according to His commandments, not according to His standards, but according to their own inventions. And, of course, the Pharisees had developed this very sophisticated system of worship which was totally man-made. And in the first nine verses of Matthew 15, you have a very interesting situation. The Pharisees say to Jesus: Verse 2, "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" Why are You breaking our rules? Our standards? "Because they're not washing their hands when they eat bread." It didn't mean that they weren't washing them for the sake of cleanliness, but that they were not ceremonially washing. They were not going through some ritual.

"And He answered, 'Why do you transgress the commandment of God by your traditions?'" That's the issue. They said, "You don't worship by our traditions." And Jesus said, "You don't worship by God's commands. You've invented your own system." And then, He gives them an illustration of it. And then down in verse 7 He says, you hypocrites. "You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, 'This people draweth near unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips but their heart is far from Me for in vain do they worship Me.'" It is useless, fruitless, pointless worship

because they have substituted the commandments of men for the truth of God. And every time I see all the holy hocus-pocus that goes on in so many, many so-called Christian churches, I see the substitution of the tradition of men for the commandments of God. God says, I will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, not through images, or through rituals, or through liturgies, but in spirit and in truth.

In chapter 23, the Lord further indicts the Pharisees, in Matthew. And it goes all through a whole list of things. But as one classic illustration of the folly of their kind of worship, verse 23 of Matthew chapter 23 says: "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. For you pay your tithe of mint, and anise, and cumin." That's herbs and plants and seeds. If they had ten seeds, they'd count out one, you know, and give it. "But you have omitted the weightier issues of the law, justice, mercy and faith: these ought you to have done, not to have left the other undone." And so, they had missed the whole point of true worship. They were straining at gnats and swallowing camels, and they were hypocrites. "Cleaning the outside," verse 25, "while inside they were full of extortion and excess. And painted white, but inside full of dead men's bones."

So, what I'm trying to show you is there is a category of unacceptable worship. You cannot worship false gods. You cannot worship the true God by reducing Him to imagery, reducing Him to an idol, reducing Him to an icon in any way. And you cannot worship the true God in a self-styled manner. It must be according to the prescription of holy Scripture.

And fourthly, and I think this could kind of sum it up. The fourth kind of unacceptable worship is to worship the true God with a wrong attitude. You cannot worship Him with a materializing of Him into some image. You cannot truly worship Him with a self-styled way, and you cannot worship Him, even though you don't have an image, and even though you try to follow the Scripture, if your attitude isn't right, if your heart isn't right.

So, now we've really funneled it right down, haven't we? True worship, we eliminate all the false gods. We eliminate all the images of the true God. We eliminate all the self-styled modes of worship. We come down to the biblically revealed kind of worship of the true God, but it must be with a true heart attitude. And now, we really get down to where we live. All of you can say, "Amen," to the other things; you don't worship false gods, and you don't worship the true God in an image. We don't have some kind of statue up here, or some kind of replica that we all bow down to like the golden calf, and we don't even invent our own ways to worship God. We pretty much try to stay by Scripture. So, we funnel all the way down to the last element of unacceptable worship: do you have the right attitude? Because if you don't, God will find that unacceptable just as well.

Now, I want to take a minute to develop this, so turn in your Bible to the Old Testament, the book of Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, and we'll work our way from there back deeper into the Old Testament to see this truth. And I really believe this provides a death blow to all legalism and all ritualism, all formalism. Malachi the prophet indicting the people of God, indicting them because of their sin, and he does so in many ways in this marvelous prophecy, he points up at least seven sins which are monumental sins of which they're guilty. But one that stands out and dominates all is that they were involved in worshipping God with the wrong attitude. They were going through it as a functionary, they were just going through the motions and their hearts weren't in it. They were just like the Pharisees, really, whose heart was far from God.

But just watch. Begin in verse 6 of chapter 1 and Malachi speaks to Israel. "A son honors his father, and a servant his master." Now, that's a truism, isn't it? That's an established fact. Nobody is going

to argue with that. A son normally honors his father, a servant honors his master. That's the basic principle. "If then I be a father," and they couldn't argue with that either, he was their father. "Where is my honor? And if I be a master, where is my reverence? Saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests that despise my name." Now, wait a minute. The priests despised His name? Where is My honor? Where is My worship? And what do the priest's say? "In what way have we despised Thy name?" What are you saying? How did we do that? We've been carrying out our function. We've been doing it all just the way the prescription says.

The prophet takes it a step further in verse 7. "Ye offer polluted flesh upon Mine altar, and ye say, 'In what way have we polluted Thee?'" You know how? Listen to this, "In that ye say, 'The altar of the Lord,'" that's what it means. The table of the Lord refers to that altar. "The altar of the Lord is contemptible." What in the world were they doing? They were treating their worship with contempt. It was strictly a function. It was strictly a routine. It was strictly a ritual. There was no heart. And they were actually bringing to God that which was the least rather than that which was the best. They had contempt for worship.

Before you pounce on them with both feet, and before I do, may I remind you that having contempt for worship is coming to worship with any kind of a wrong attitude, any kind. And what were they doing? Verse 8, "They were offering the blind for sacrifice, is that not evil?" What does that mean? Well, when they would want to bring an animal to sacrifice to God, they'd bring a blind one because a blind one was useless to them, a blind one would probably die anyway because it couldn't find its way to the food. And they would just get rid of the blind animal that way. And it may reflect the fact also that the blindness was due to some disease, and so they brought a diseased animal. That was the kind of worship they offered God. Just give God what you can't use anyhow. "And if you offer," it says in verse 8, "The lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto the governor," try that when you go to pay your taxes, "and see if the governor will be pleased with thee and accept that?" You give Me what you wouldn't even give the government. "And now, I pray you, beseech God that He will be gracious unto us, this has been by your means: will He regard your persons? Saith the Lord of hosts." If this is how you treat God, how do you think God's going to treat you? You think He's going to regard you any different than you regarded Him?

He says in verse 10: "You kindle fire on My altar for nothing." There's no heart. There's no spirit. "And I have no pleasure in you," saith the Lord of hosts, now watch this, "neither will I," watch the next word, what is it? "Accept an offering at your hand." There's some things God won't accept. He will not accept worship offered in a materialized way. He will not accept worship offered in a self-styled way. And He will not accept worship offered half-heartedly. "For from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the nations; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name and a pure offering." I do not want your impure. You know, when God told them to bring a lamb, what kind of lamb were they to bring? Without spot, without blemish, the best in the flock. They weren't doing it.

And verse 12 says: "You have profaned it." In other words, you have treated it as an unworthy thing. You've treated it as a useless thing. "And you have said, 'The table of the Lord is polluted.'" It's contemptible. They were treating the table of God with contempt. And then, verse 13, just a really sad statement, "And you have also said, 'Behold what a weariness,' and you sniffed at it, and you brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick, and thus you brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? Cursed be the deceiver, who has in his flock a male, and vows," makes a big vow to God, plays spiritual, "and sacrifices unto the Lord a corrupt thing, for I am a great King,

saith the Lord of hosts, and My name is terrible among the nations.”

So, He says look, and here, by the way if you go all the way back see to verse 6, He’s indicting the priests. The priests were the leaders in the sin, and it filtered all the way down to the people. The whole system was rotten from top to bottom. They had contempt to the table of the Lord. In verse 13, I think, is the key, it says, “Behold what a weariness.” To them the whole exercise of worship was just a big pain in the neck. What a drag, what a boring deal, what a pain. We have to go down there and do that deal again. Well, just get rid of that blind lamb, or that lame one. And they went through the function, and they went through the form, but their hearts weren’t in it. There was no reality there.

And in chapter 3, they even went further. Verse 13, they got so sick of doing this that they finally began to just badmouth God. “‘Your words have been stout against Me,’ saith the Lord. Yet ye say,” and they always come back with this phony attitude “What have we spoken against thee? What do You mean? Why, we’re doing all of the things the Scripture says.” “But you have said, ‘It is vain to serve God’ and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance and walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?” In other words, you’ve decided that you don’t make enough money doing that. There’s no profit in it. Boy, what a terrible, terrible attitude.

And there was result for that. Chapter 4 says: “The day comes that it will burn like an oven; and the proud and all that do wickedly shall be stubble. And the day comes that God shall burn them up, leaving neither root nor branch. He will tread down,” verse 3, “the wicked; there will be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I do this, says the Lord of hosts.” And then, verse 5 and 6 talks about the terrible day of the Lord, and the smiting of the earth with a curse.

You see, the people of God had come to the place where they were worshipping the true God, in the true way, with the wrong attitude. Their hearts weren’t in it. Now, just kind of look in your own heart. You say, I don’t worship false gods. That’s good. I worship the true God. And I haven’t really reduced Him to some idol, some image, some statue. And I haven’t sort of invented my own way of worship. I’m not sitting on a mountain contemplating my navel. I’m trying to do it by the book, do it by the Word of God. Then, ask yourself if your heart’s in it. Ask do yourself if, when it comes time to give, do you give the best, the best of all you have. When it comes time to make your vows and your promises to God, do You make Him the promise that is the most reflective of magnanimity and generosity? Is your heart filled with awe and reverence? Because if it isn’t, the stuff you’re going through is pointless and unacceptable.

Look at Amos, the prophet Amos, and you’ll find the same message and the prophecies of God to His people. But listen to what it says in chapter 5 verse 21, and this is really amazing. Imagine God saying this: “I hate, I despise your feast days. I will not take delight in your solemn assemblies.” I can’t stand your worship is what He says. I can’t stand your services; I can’t stand your worship activities. “Though you offer me burnt offerings.” Now, there we are back to that burnt offering again, that first offering which was totally consumed, emblematic of the priority of worship. “You give Me your worship, and you bring Me your meal offerings, I will not,” what’s that word again? “Accept them.” They are not acceptable. I will not accept them. “I will not take the peace offerings of your fat beasts.” Now, they’re even giving the good animals here. They’re giving the fat animals here. And they’re doing it in the right way externally but He will not take it. And He says in verse 23: “Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I do not like your singing, I will not listen to the melody of your harps.” Why? “Let justice run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Your hearts aren’t right, do you see? There’s no justice and equity; there’s no righteousness.

While you're making all these offerings to Me, verse 26, "You have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun, your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus," says the Lord whose name is The God of hosts." God says I'm through with you. Because while on the one hand you come and you offer to Me and you go through all of this performance of worship, you turn right around and worship false gods. You're so engrained and engulfed and involved in the system of the world that this is hypocrisy and unacceptable.

Backing up even further, look at Hosea, chapter 6 verse 4. Ephraim is synonymous with Israel, and Judah is mentioned here as well. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?" It's almost melancholy on the part of God. What am I going to do with you two? "Your goodness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away." Your goodness doesn't stay. "Therefore I have hewed them," or cut them down, "slain them by the word of My mouth, the judgments are as the light that goes forth." Why? Listen, here it is: "I desired mercy, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than," what? "Burnt offerings." There we are back to burnt offerings again, the act of worship. I want more than just a burnt offering; I want you to know Me, and I want you to reflect My heart and My attitude of mercy. "But they like men have transgressed the covenant; there have they dealt treacherously against Me." It goes on to talk about their iniquity and their pollution.

Go back a little further to Isaiah chapter 1. Isaiah chapter 1. And again God indicts Judah in a similar way to Amos. "Hear the word of the Lord," verse 10. Then in verse 11, "To what," watch this, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?" What good are they? "Saith the Lord, 'I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of the goats.'" I've had it. And again, we see the burnt offerings there. I'm through with it. "When you come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand to tread My courts? Bring no more empty offerings, your incense is an abomination unto Me, the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot bear, it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings." And God had ordained all of these things. "Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth. They are a trouble unto Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread forth your hands, I'll hide My eyes from you. Yea, when you make many prayers, I'll not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes and cease to do evil. Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

And then, the Lord gives that wonderful, wonderful statement through the prophet: "Come now let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." And they did rebel, and they did refuse the invitation to salvation. But the point here, whether you're talking about Malachi, or Amos, or Hosea, or Isaiah, is all the same. They were doing the right thing, to the right God, in the right way, with the wrong attitude, and God doesn't accept that.

Now, just one Scripture in this regard in the New Testament, the seventh chapter of Mark, and I'm going to wrap this point up. Mark 7 verse 6, and this is similar to what I saw earlier in Matthew 15, but I just want to point it out to you 'cause I think it sums it up. "He answered and said to them, 'Well hath

Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites,' as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.'" Their heart is far from Me. That is unacceptable. And may I tell you this, people? Listen, if you worship false gods, if you worship the true God reduced to some kind of image, if you worship the true God in a self-styled, self-defined way, or if you worship the true God in the right way with the wrong attitude it's unacceptable, unacceptable, and it will affect your destiny, it will affect your soul because God cannot accept one who is unacceptable.

Now, that is the first kind of worship which affects your destiny. Let me tell you about the second: acceptable worship. And I'm just going to hurry through this, but not without your understanding, because I think it's so important. When you come to God with acceptable worship, it affects your destiny. It manifests the life of God within you.

Now, I think just as a beginning point let me read to you what I think is maybe a very significant definition of a true acceptable worshipper: Psalm 24:3. Just listen to it, write it down, Psalm 24:3 to 6 says this: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place?" Now, what does that mean? That means who is going to be what? Accepted. When they approach God, and they want to come into His hill, when they want to stand in His holy place, who will He accept? He will not accept the one who worships a false god, the one who worships the true God in a wrong manner, in a self-styled way, or with a wrong attitude.

Who will He accept? Here it is, verse 4: "He who hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them who seek Him, who seek Thy face." Those who are acceptable are the ones who have clean hands. That is, they are in obedience to God, purified and made clean. Who have pure hearts; their motive, their desire is right. They're blessed, and they are the generation who truly seek God. The fact is that if you come to God on your own terms, man-made terms, you're not seeking God; you're seeking only to pacify your own imagination.

Now, stay with me, here comes really the heart and soul of our whole study, so get your brains screwed down tight and don't miss anything. Acceptable worship is really a key to understanding the whole matter of salvation. Hang on to this thought, the goal of salvation is to produce acceptable worshippers. Did you get that? The goal of salvation is to produce acceptable worshippers. So, if you're truly saved, you're an acceptable worshipper. If you're an acceptable worshipper, you've truly come into God's presence. And thus, as we look at your worship, as you examine your worship, you can understand whether or not you're saved.

Now, let me show you some Scripture to help you understand this. Back to our text, John 4. John 4, and get your Bible handy because I'm going to show you several. John 4 verse 23, "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers." Now, beloved, that is a term to describe a Christian, a saint, a true believer. We could as well be called true worshippers as we are called Christians. We could as well be called true worshippers as we are called believers, or saints, or children of God, or any other term to describe our identity and our union with Christ. We are true worshippers who worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Now, we don't always do it as fully as we ought, but look at the end of verse 23: "For the Father seeketh such to worship Him." You know why the Father sent the Son into the world? Very clear. Jesus said, "I am come to seek and to save that which was lost." For what purpose? For what purpose? Why did God send Christ to seek sinners and save them? It says it right here, "Because the Father seeks such to do," what? To do what? "To worship Him." That's the

reason you're redeemed, you understand that? You were not redeemed primarily to keep you out of hell.

If God wanted to keep you out of hell He could have not just created you, it would have accomplished the same thing, and you wouldn't have missed it. You wouldn't have missed heaven because you wouldn't have known about it, you wouldn't be. No. You see, the reason you're saved is not to make you happy, as nice as it is and as happy as it may make you. The reason you are saved is to worship God. You were redeemed because the Father seeks some to worship Him. That is the sole reason why God created man, and set out to redeem him because God sought such to worship. So, worshipping God is synonymous with Christian existence, with being a believer.

In Acts chapter 18, we can build our case further. Verse 7, it says: "And Paul," of course, from his missionary journey, "departed from Athens," verse 1, "and came to Corinth." And verse 7 says: "Departed from there, entered into a certain man's house, named Titus Justus." Now, he departed from the synagogue because he ran into such flak with the Jews, and he went into the house of a man named Titus Justus. Listen, "One who," what? "Worshipped God." What does that mean? That's just another way of saying he was a believer. He was a believer. He was a believer; he worshipped God. That is what a believer is, one who worships God. And if that is what we are, then don't you see how important it is that we truly worship as fully as we ought?

Verse 13, the Jews attack Paul and they bring him into the judgment seat, to Gallio, and this is their accusation: "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God." You know what Paul's ministry was? You know what he was doing in his ministry? He was persuading men to do what? Worship God. That's synonymous with salvation. Do you see what I'm trying to point out? That's what the view of his ministry was. You see, why I'm in the ministry is to bring people to the point where they can worship God because it is right. We do not evangelize in order that you might be kept from hell; that is secondary. We do not primarily evangelize in order that you may be quote-unquote, "Blessed." We evangelize in order that you might worship God, who is worthy. Because for you to live apart from worshipping God is affront to His holy nature, and you are a rebel in His world.

Paul was accused of persuading men to worship God, only they thought it was contrary to the right system. But how interesting. By the way, do you realize that when Jesus gave in John 4 that tremendous speech on how to worship, do you realize who He gave that to? He did not give that to a theologian. He did not give that to an erudite Pharisee. He did not give that to a Cornelius who was a God-fearing Jew, He gave it to a prostitute. That's right. He preached worship to a prostitute who had a whole handful of husbands and was living with a man who wasn't her husband. He gave it to a woman who was a prostitute, who could have cared less. She wasn't even one with an awakened heart and she didn't even seek God. She wasn't even interested. She doesn't even show any curiosity. He just walked up, flat, cold-turkey to a harlot and told her how to worship God. Why? Because that's the heart and soul of evangelism. We are calling men to worship because God is worthy of worship.

Now, when you understand that you will understand how tragic it is then for the Christian who understands that he is called and redeemed to worship God, to not worship God as fully as God ought to be worshipped. And that was the thrust of Paul's ministry.

In Acts 24:14 when Paul discusses with Felix his perspective, his theology, if you will, I love what he says in verse 14: "But this I confess unto thee." I'll just confess, here's where I'm at, "After the way

which they call heresy,” the way, you can put quotes around it; the way was a term for the Christian faith. “After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers.” Now, when Paul gives his testimony, he says, “I worship the God of my fathers after the Christian faith called the way.” So, Paul called people to worship God. And when he gave his own testimony he said, ‘I worship God.’” We say that too little, you know that? When’s the last time you evangelized somebody in that manner? Said, I worship God? After the manner of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, the gospel record supports this concept. Go back with me to Matthew and I’ll show you something very interesting. I don’t think I ever really fully understood this until I got so deeply involved in it in the last couple of weeks. But as you trace, and just take Matthew, and we won’t go into Mark or Luke or John, but I just want to take Matthew. And let me show you that the gospel record supports the fact that people are redeemed for the purpose of worship. People who see the truth of Christ have an immediate response of worship. And that means to give honor, and homage, and respect, and reverence, and adoration, and praise to one who is above you, to God Himself.

Let’s begin in Matthew 2, and I’ll just run you through maybe six, seven, or eight passages and you’ll see it. Matthew 2:11, we come to the birth of Christ and the arrival of the king makers of the east, “And when they were come into the house,” verse 11 says, “they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and,” what? “Worshipped Him.” That was the first thing they did. They fell down and worshipped. Why? Because that is the initial response to the reality of Christ. Go to chapter 8 verse 2. Jesus came down from the mountain, a great multitude followed Him, “And, behold, there came a leper,” and what did the leper do? What did he do? He worshipped Him, and said, “Lord.” You see, he knew who He was, and he worshipped Him. Go to chapter 9 verse 18: “While He spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler,” and what did he do? “He worshipped Him.”

Go to chapter 14, Jesus walks on the water. He not only had to control the sea but He had to control the disciples as well. Got back to the boat. The wind ceased, verse 32. Then, verse 33, and that’s Matthew 14:33, and now they see who He is, “And they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him saying, ‘Of a truth Thou art the Son of God.’” You see, whoever it is, whenever it is, wherever it is, the instantaneous, spontaneous immediate response to Christ is to worship.

Chapter 15 verse 25. A woman of Canaan, and it says in verse 25: “Then, came she and worshipped Him saying, Lord, help me.” She worshipped Him. Same attitude, same response. Well, go all the way to the end of Matthew, chapter 28 verse 9: “And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.” Those dear women, just like everybody else, they worshipped Him. Verse 16: “Then, the 11 disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appeared,” or appointed them rather, “and when they saw Him,” what? They worshipped Him, but some doubted.”

Now, just think through this for a minute. The sum of all of that is this: believers are first and foremost what? Worshipers. You see that? I mean, that’s the essence of the whole thing. That is the essence of what it means when it says the Father seeketh such to worship Him. We have been redeemed to worship. It’s so important.

In 9:31 of John, I just can’t resist one out of John, too good. Jesus heals a man that was born blind, and here this man born blind makes our case for us because he says this, he makes a contrast: “We know that God does not hear,” what? “Sinners.” So, on the one hand, God doesn’t hear sinners. On

the other hand, "But if any man be a worshipper of God, even doing His will, him He hears." Now, the man says there are only two options: God either hears you or He doesn't hear you. And so, there are only two kinds of people: the people God hears and the people He doesn't hear. The people He doesn't hear are sinners, and the people He hears are worshippers. So, the contrast is between a sinner and a worshipper. And so, the whole of the world can be divided into the sinners and the worshippers. Therefore, to be saved means to be a worshipper. And that becomes then the heart and soul of what we do, you see.

When God called Israel, when God called Israel as a nation, did you know that that was His purpose? He called that nation for one express purpose. Deuteronomy 26:10, "And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me, and thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God and worship before the Lord thy God." They were called to worship. That's why the tabernacle was there. That's why the temple was there. That's why the priesthood was there. The whole focus was on worship.

Now, follow the thought, Deuteronomy 26, verse 10 is worship, but you know what gives rise to worship? Go back to verse 5, Deuteronomy 26:5, "Thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God. A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became a nation, great, mighty and populous." Remember the story? Remember the story how Joseph accepted his brothers down into Egypt and they came down, were about to perish in the famine, and Joseph gave them food, and they wound up staying in Egypt all those years. And by the time they left, they were a great nation. "And the Egyptians badly treated us," verse 6, "afflicted us, laid us on as hard bondage. And we cried to the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, looked on our affliction, our labor, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and with awe inspiring terror and signs and wonders, and He brought us into this place and given us this land, the land that flows with milk and honey, therefore," he says, "worship the Lord thy God." What are we saying? Worship is the direct response to redemption. And the Old Testament picture of redemption was the deliverance from Egypt, wasn't it?

And then, in verse 11 he says: "And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you." Rejoicing. Starts with redemption, and redemption gives rise to worship and rejoicing. I really believe that's what Paul is saying in Ephesians 1: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who's blessed us with all spiritual blessing." That's an act of worship. That's a benediction, isn't it? Blessed be the God and, that's worship. Blessed be the God. Why are you saying that? 'Cause He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him. In love He has predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself. In whom we have redemption through His blood. And that's why we say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." You see, worship is the result of redemption.

And so, beloved, I submit to you that we're called to worship. Without question, we are called to worship, to render acceptable true spiritual worship. And this becomes for us, now mark it, a way of life, a way of life. It is not a sometime thing; it is an all the time thing.

I'm going to close with one other Scripture, Hebrews 12. Boy, the time flies. Hebrews 12 verse 28 and 29. I'm not even getting started. This is going to be a three month series. I can feel it coming on. Now, we have been saved to worship, have you gotten that picture? Look at Hebrews 12:28:

“Wherefore,” listen to this, “receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved.” Now, stop right there. If you’re a Christian you have received a kingdom which cannot be moved. Right? I mean, you have entered into the eternal kingdom of the living Lord Jesus Christ. You have a kingdom which cannot be moved. And when God comes along in the future and shakes the earth, and He’ll shake it, won’t He? I mean, He’ll shake it so good that the stars fall out of the sky, and the whole earth will be turned in turmoil over again and recreated in the new heaven and the new earth. God is going to shake it, but we will belong to a kingdom which cannot be shaken, cannot be moved. This is talking then about believers.

Now, if we are believers, now follow, then, “Let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” Now, may I help you to make one small alteration in the terms used in the Authorized Version? And would you change the word serve to worship. For the same Greek word translated serve in that verse, back in chapter 10 verse 2 is translated worship, *latreuō*. It is worship. Since we have received the kingdom which cannot be moved, since we have become worshippers of God then let us have the graciousness to respond to God who has made us worshippers by worshipping God acceptably. If we want to put it in Pauline terms it comes out like this: present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God which is your spiritual worship.

And notice what it says at the end of verse 28, “With reverence and godly fear: For our God is a what? Consuming fire.” You better worship God or else. Acceptable worship is the result of salvation, first of all. But really filling out that worship and living up to its fullness is the result of the graciousness of the believer who willingly offers his body in an act of spiritual service, whereby he worships God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Because God’s a consuming fire and you need to be worried about the consequence if you don’t worship properly.

Can I apply this for a minute? If you have trouble in your life, problems in your life, and you go through a checklist as to why these things may be occurring in your life. Put at the top of that checklist: perhaps I’m not worshipping God with a true heart and a true spirit. Perhaps I do not have the grace to worship God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. And the consequences are His chastening’s.

Well, next time. I can’t wait. We’re going to find out how this touches every area of life. And then, we’re going to get into the corporate praise and worship of the assembly and see how that is to work. And by the time we’re done, I pray God we’ll be worshipping in ways we’ve never worshipped before.

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