**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Worship, Part 3**
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-134

Again this morning we have the privilege of turning to the Word of God and considering this matter of worship. We have been studying the anatomy of the church, talking about what a church is and how a church conducts its life which really boils down to what Christians are and how Christians live. And as we have looked at the anatomy of the church, we've been considering the internal systems, such as the body has internal systems to carry its life, so the church has internal systems which are spiritual attitudes that carry its life. And among the many spiritual attitudes that are essential to a healthy church is this attitude of worship...worship.

And last time we...we addressed the issue of the priority of worship, how vital, how important worship is. In fact, worship is a way of life for Christians. We reminded ourselves of Psalm 45:1, "My heart is overflowing with a good matter." And the Hebrew for "overflowing" is bubbling up, or boiling over. In other words, the psalmist is saying I'm so filled with the goodness of God, so grateful to the Lord that at the slightest provocation I burst forth in worship and in praise. And that is a pattern among the godly throughout all of redemptive history, and certainly throughout all of Scripture. Worship is giving honor to God...giving honor to God. And it should be the spontaneous response of every believer to all the issues of life. We should be on the brink of a doxology at all times. We talked about being doxological by nature, responding to every good, bad, or indifferent situation with a spontaneous doxology of praise to the glory of God. We are to be true worshipers. That is a way of life for us. That's not something we do only on Sunday morning, that's something we do corporately, and then again on Sunday night. It's not something we do when we get together in a group or something we do when we're listening to music of worship, but it is a way of life. It is a spontaneous almost instantaneous response to all the matters of life to bring before God an appropriate praise and thanks. That's the kind of thing that should characterize Christians, they should be spontaneously doxological, spontaneously bursting forth, bubbling over, boiling over with praise and worship to God. We are by nature worshipers.

And that must be the attitude of the church. In fact, a dominant attitude in the life of the church. We come together then as individual worshipers to express worship collectively. And, of course, at that time there is a great joy and a great exhilaration and a great thrill in bringing together the combined worship of God's people and offering Him praise together as we do in such congregations as this. But we have been called to worship. And so it should be characteristic of each of our lives that we have spontaneous proclivity toward expressing praise and thanks and honor to God at all times as a matter of course through life.

Now in discussing this spiritual attitude of worship we have chosen a text from John 4 and I would invite you to open your Bible, if you would please do that, to the fourth chapter of John. And to give you a little bit of background here, just to rehearse what we said last week, Jesus is having a conversation with a Samaritan woman. And this is a very unusual situation. First of all, because she is a Samaritan, and secondly because she is a woman. Jews for the most part, Jewish men looked down on women and did not include women in the normal course of conversation and particularly in the normal process of religious and spiritual and theological discourse. Not that they shouldn't have, in fact they should have. But as Judaism developed, it developed chauvinistically, we might say, and women were largely excluded. And Jews did not have anything whatsoever to do with Samaritans because they saw Samaritans as the worst kind of defiled people, worst than normal Gentiles because they were a mixture of Jew and Gentile.

And as I told you last week, what happened was when the northern kingdom of Israel was basically taken into captivity in 722 B.C. and then about 140 years later the southern kingdom was taken into captivity in 586 B.C., during those two periods when the people were led to captivity, the first captivity the Assyrians took the Jews and scattered them everywhere, the second captivity the Babylonians took them to Babylon. In both cases they left some stragglers behind. Many of them were women and some children. There were some men as well. But they left these stragglers behind in the land as someone like refugees. And those Jewish women, those Jewish refugees intermarried with the existing Gentile nations around Israel. And that's what formed the Samaritan race. So they were very, very despised by the Jews because they had...they had sold their birthright, if you will, they had despised being an Israelite, which of course was a very, very important point of spiritual and national pride for the Jews. And so they were despised because they had disdained their Jewishness.

But to add further to the vitriol that existed against these Samaritans was the fact that when eventually the children of Israel captive in Babylon were released to come back, the Samaritans became their most formidable enemies. Do you remember in the decree of Cyrus, the Persian, the Jews were allowed to return and there was a return under the leadership of a man named Zerubbabel who then led them in the building of the temple.

There was a second return as well, and then there was the final return when Nehemiah led a group back to rebuild the wall. You remember the story of Nehemiah. Nehemiah led these people back to rebuild the wall. He had been informed, of course, that the situation in Jerusalem was precarious. They had a temple. They were very poor. The economics of the time were...were really very tragic. They were largely at the whim and will of their neighbors. They were somewhat defenseless because they didn't have a walled city. And Nehemiah asked the king if he could have permission to go back. Well Nehemiah had gained favor with the king and he had gained that favor because he was the king's cupbearer. What that meant was that before any food or any drink was given to the king, he tested it by tasting it, which meant he put his life on the line because in ancient times people would

poison a king, and in this case they would wind up poisoning his cupbearer. So a cupbearer became a confidante, an intimate confidante with the king and that was Nehemiah's situation.

Also, the king was related to Esther who no doubt had passed down good favorable things about the Jews. And so things were good in that climate to allow Nehemiah to go back and build a wall, something normally the Persian government would not allow because it would simply make it more difficult for them to rule over Jerusalem which was a vassal state. But in this case they let Nehemiah go back and build the wall.

Well as he went back, you remember the story, he gathered all the people, they began to build the wall. Very, very difficult situation. There was so much debris and so much rubble from the disaster in 586 that they could hardly get around the debris and the rubble to do the work. And then there was the problem of no food, and that reached such large...large dilemma points that the people were actually selling off their property. They were unable to pay their debt to the people who had mortgages against their land so the land was foreclosed on. And it even got to so bad that they were selling their children into slavery just to buy food. And, of course, on top of that they had to pay the taxes to the Persian government. It's a very difficult time.

Well on top of all of this difficulty comes Nehemiah and he wants the people to all gather to build the wall and major opposition comes and remember who it comes from? From who? Samaritans. So the hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans was great. You remember there was a man named Sanballat and there was a man named Tobiah the Ammonite and there was another named Geshem who was called an Arab, and they were leading a sort of a Samaritan coalition to try to stop the Jews from building a wall, because once they built they wall they would, of course, be able to defend themselves against any marauding Samaritans. And so the Samaritans were no favorites of the Jews by any means, both for reasons of disaffection toward their own Jewish heritage and hostility against the returning Jews from captivity.

And so it's against that background that our Lord Jesus goes to Samaria where Jews never went. They would go around Samaria, crossing the Jordan River twice, if need be, to avoid Samaritan land lest they would...lest they would get defiled dust on their feet. You remember in the Bible there's an expression "shake the dust off," well that was an expression developed out of sort of Jewish racism wherein if they were traveling in a Gentile country, before they came back and stepped across the borders of Israel, they would shake all the Gentile dirt off everything so they didn't bring defiled dirt back into the holy land. So that was the way they viewed things, and the Samaritans were the most defiled of all.

But here Jesus purposely goes into Samaria and to do a most remarkable thing, to talk with a woman...not only a Samaritan, but to talk with a woman. And not only to talk with the Samaritan woman but to offer to this Samaritan woman eternal life and to offer her a true relationship with

Jehovah God.  Amazing.  And furthermore, it is here in Samaria to an adulteress Samaritan woman that Jesus discloses His Messiahship.  And you might have thought, certainly the Jews might have thought, that when the Messiah arrives what He's going to do is go to the temple and disclose His messiahship to the high priest.  He's going to start with the top religious dog, and then talk to the rest of the religious leaders.  And quite the contrary, He went to one who was an outcast and who was a woman and who wasn't even in the land who was by a well out in the country and there disclosed who He was.  Amazing.

It is in this conversation that the subject of worship comes up.  And Jesus says to the woman, "I want to offer you eternal life."  And she knows He's speaking theologically and spiritually and she says, "I want that eternal life."  And He says, "But, lady, you've got a problem and your problem is you have to come to grips with your sin."  And He unmasks her and identifies her as a woman who has had five husbands, a woman with a scarlet past, to put it mildly, who is now living with a man who is not her husband.  She is living in fornication or adultery.  And that sin is exposed.  And she has a right response to that.  She says in verse 19, "Sir, I perceive You're a prophet."  I get the picture here that You're a prophet.  You speak for God. And I want my life it be right...is between the blanks here...I just don't know where to go to worship.  "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain," that's Mount Gerizim, which is in Samaria, "you people, you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."  And she's saying...where do I go to get my life right?  I'm ready to fall down in penitence, I'm ready to acknowledge my sin, I want to reach out and receive eternal life which means she had the faith to believe that God would give her eternal life and she had the sense of her own sinfulness.  She was prepared to repent and believe.  She said...where do I go to worship?

You see, she associated this with worship, and rightly so.  She associated this whole enterprise with worship.  And that's what salvation is.  Salvation commences a life of worship which never ends.  It only escalates until finally in eternity we worship in perfection.  I'll say that again.  Salvation commences a life of worship.  That's why Philippians 3:3 says we are worshipers, we worship God in the spirit...have no confidence in the flesh and rejoice in Christ Jesus.  We are worshipers.  We have fallen down, bowed down, prostrated ourselves before a holy God, confessed our sin and believed in His salvation in Jesus Christ and thus been saved and have become worshipers.  That's what we are. We are lifelong worshipers and then we will worship for eternity.

You read the account of Isaiah in chapter 66 as Isaiah looks at the end and he sees the new heaven and the new earth and he says, "Around that time the whole world is going to fall down and worship the Lord."  And he probably is referring to the great coming Kingdom.  And then comes the new heaven and the new earth and all throughout eternity is worship and worship and worship.  That is the goal which we will reach when we're in the Kingdom with our Lord Jesus Christ and when we're in eternal presence with Him.  Until that time we continue to be worshipers.  That is our life.  We are a congregation of true worshipers.

And this woman understood that coming to God was becoming a worshiper. When God sought out Israel and called out Israel, He had as His purpose to make a worshiping nation, to have a group of people who would worship Him. And the sad story of Israel is that they refused to do that.

Back in Isaiah chapter 1 and I'll show you several Old Testament passages to start with this morning, but in Isaiah chapter 1 the Lord speaks and He says in verse 11, "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" says the Lord. In other words, what do they mean to Me? Implied, nothing. "Your multiplied sacrifices are a farce to Me, they are useless. I have had enough...verse 11...of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle, I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer. Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity in the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me, I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you. Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen, your hands are covered with blood."

This is quite amazing because everything that God says He hates here was what God prescribed. It was God, you remember, who said I want multiplied sacrifice. It was God who said I want burnt offerings and I want the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. It was God who said you must come into My courts, you must bring an offering, you must bring incense, you must remember the new moon and the sabbath, you must come to the solemn assemblies. It was God who appointed the feasts. It was God who did all of this. It was God who called them to prayer. And now God says I hate all of it, I reject all of it. The reason...it was superficial, it was hypocritical, it was on the outside only and not from the heart. And so in verse 16 He says, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean." I don't want your superficial external worship, I want a clean heart. Remove the evil of your deeds from my sight. Cease to do evil.

Over in verse 18, "Come now and let us reason together...says the Lord...though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool." In other words, cleansing is available, purification is available if you will repent and get your heart right. What did Israel do? They maintained a form of godliness without the power, they maintained a zeal for God without the knowledge, they maintained an external religion without the heart.

In Hosea you have a similar indictment against them, Hosea chapter 6 and verse 4, "What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?"

which is another name used for the northern kingdom of Israel, "What shall I do with you, O Judah," the southern kingdom, "For your loyalty is like a morning cloud and like the dew which goes away early." Just like the morning clouds burn off in the noon day sun and the morning dew dries so

quickly, that's how your loyalty is.  No heart loyalty.  No real love for God.  They are fickle.

Verse 6, God says, "I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."  Don't give Me your shallow superficial ceremony, give Me your heart, give Me your love, give Me your loyalty, give Me yourself.

In Amos chapter 5, again this similar indictment is rendered against them.  Verse 21, God says, "I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies."  This would be all the feasts and festivals that God Himself had put in place.  "And even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them.  And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.  Take away from me the noise of your songs, I will not even listen to the sound of your harps, but let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an overflowing stream."  Deal with heart issues.  Deal with heart issues.  You see, you had a people who had all the external forms of religion, but the true worship wasn't there.  And that is the sad, sad story of Israel.

You come to the last of the Old Testament books, Malachi, chapter 1 and God says in verse 6, "A son honors his father, a servant his master...then...if I am a Father, where is My honor?  And if I am a Master, where is My respect? says the Lord of host to you.  O priests, who despise My name."  He indicts the priests for leading the people in this shallow superficiality.  And the priests said, "How have we despised Your name?"  Verse 7, "You are presenting defiled food upon My altar."  Instead of bringing to the altar the best, the firstfruits, they brought the garbage.  They literally took the garbage to the altar.

You say, "How have we defiled Thee?  In that you say the table of the Lord is to be despised."  You despise My table, you despise My altar, you despise Me to the degree that you bring Me the garbage, the inedible that you would otherwise throw away.  In verse 8, "You bring Me blind animals, you bring Me lame animals and sick animals.  Is that not evil?  Why not offer it to your governor, see how he likes it when he comes to collect your taxes.  Would he be pleased with you or would he receive you kindly, says the Lord of host?  But now will you not entreat God's favor that He may be gracious to you?  With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly, says the Lord of host?" You better begin to pray after bringing God the lame and the sick and the blind and taking the garbage out and giving it to God at His altar.

Verse 10, it's reached this, "O that there were one among you who would shut the gates."  What is He talking about?  The gates to the temple.  Shut it that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar.  I am not pleased with you, says the Lord of host, nor will I accept an offering from you."  Verse 12, "You are profaning it."  And then in verse 14, after rehearsing again how they brought the lame and the sick animals, "Cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord.  For I am a great King, says the Lord of host, and My name is feared among the nations."

So here is Israel and Israel was called to be a worshiping people and their worship was a sham. Their worship was false. Their worship was shallow and hypocritical. And God turned from Israel.

And that's how the Old Testament ends, by the way, Next there comes a pronouncement of the judgment of the day of the Lord. But notice back in verse 11, all is not over with, verse 11 says, "For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting," that means from one end of the world to the other, "My name will be great among the nations and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name and a grain offering that is pure, for My name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of host." God says if it's not you it will be the nations. And God turned from Israel, and this is in part a prophecy of the church as well as having implications for the millennial kingdom. God is going to call the nations out and among them there will be a true worshiping people. God is gathering worshipers.

And that brings us to the point that we made as we established ourselves that the source of worship is God...is God. Go back to John chapter 4. God is calling out a worshiping people to take the place that Israel once occupied, to be true worshipers of the true and living God as a witness to Him throughout the world. Verse 23, "For such people...end of the verse...the Father seeks to be His worshipers." We are worshipers because that is the divine plan. We are worshipers because God has sought us and saved us. We are worshipers because we have been drawn to Him. Worship then is our way of life. It was said of Titus in Acts 18:7 that he was a worshiper of God. It says later in that same chapter in verse 13 that the people worshiped God. That is really a definition of being a Christian. In fact they said of Paul, he goes around preaching that people should worship God.

I don't know the last time I've heard an evangelist preach that people should worship God. But that's what we do. That's what an evangelist should do, call people to the true and appropriate worship of God. Not to something hypocritical but to the true and appropriate worship of the true and living God. That's what salvation is. You become a worshiper forever and you worship the true God.

When Jesus came into the world the issue was worship. The first public act that Jesus did in John chapter 2 was to make a whip and to go into the temple and just tear the whole place up. The first thing He did was cleanse the place of...what?...of worship. That was the first thing He did...clean up the false worship. And then He began to seek true worshipers. Coming right out of chapter 2 in John's gospel after Jesus has cleansed the temple, He goes right into a conversation with Nicodemus and immediately He begins to move in the heart of that man who became a true worshiper. And then in chapter 4 it's the woman by the well who becomes a true worshiper. And then He goes to carry it beyond that. He came to attack false worship and replace it with true heart worship. Just as the angels worshiped when the announcement was made that the Son was born, just as the wise men came following the shepherds, perhaps some long time after the shepherds, and all of them came to worship the child, that is the appropriate response. God wants worship and He wants the worship of Him through His Son.

So we are called to be worshipers. We become worshipers by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and becoming saved. And that's why again Philippians 3 defines us as worshipers. We worship God in the spirit, that's what we do, we are true worshipers. We are the ones who fall prostrate, beat on our breasts and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner and save me." We are those who recognize our sinfulness and have come to worship the true and living God. That's what we do. And we'll do it forever and ever and ever. As I've told you many times, when the Father gave us to the Son in eternity past and wrote our names in the Lamb's book of life, it was so that we would forever and ever and ever and ever worship and glorify the Son. We have been called to be worshipers. And everything that happens in life should elicit worship from our hearts immediately...immediately.

All right, enough on that. Now let me get to what I want to talk to you about this morning. You know, those are things I just think of while I'm standing here, now I'm going to say something I wrote down. And I might get through half a page, if I'm fortunate here. Let me talk not about the source of worship being God who saved us, but the object of worship. And this is a very important point to make. The object of worship, that too is revealed to this woman. This woman wants to know how to worship and first He says...Well the Father is seeking true worshipers, so you've got to come on those terms. The Father has already prompting her heart, you've got to come being willing to be a true worshiper, now here's the object of your worship...He says. Here's the object of your worship.

Two realities come out, verse 21 and verse 23 say, "You shall worship the Father...you shall worship the Father." So the object of our worship is God who is Father. Then in verse 24, the object of our worship is God who is spirit. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. Now follow this. We are worshiping the God who is spirit, literally verse 24 says, "Spirit the God" in Greek, equating the two. The God who is the eternal spirit and the God who is Father, that's who we worship. This is very, very important. Two aspects of God which are essential to true worship. We worship the God who is spirit and the God who is Father, we worship God as spirit and God as Father.

Now what does that mean?

You need to know what it means. Let me take the first one first. God as spirit, what does that refer to? His essential nature. It refers to God's essential nature. And that is to say He is spirit the God, that is to say He is the God who is spirit by essential nature. He is not to be conceived of or represented in material terms. He is not a rock. He is not a tree. He is not all rocks, He's not all trees. You can't hold to pantheism, that is that everything is God. You can't hold to any kind of viewpoint that views God as contained in any material form or represented in any material form that is in any way like Him. He is non-material, He is spirit. And as Jesus said, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones." So He is non-material. He is to be conceived of only as spirit, never is He to be conceived of in material terms.

Now what do we mean by that? Well in Colossians 1:15 it says, "Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God." God is a spirit and spirit is invisible. Spirit is invisible. It is not manifest to the eye. God cannot be seen. God can choose to reveal Himself in something that can be seen, such as fire or a cloud or in the case of Christ a human, but God essential is spirit and has not flesh and bones. God is spirit and thus invisible.

First Timothy 1 even tells us more about this. "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible." He is eternal, that is He is uncreated. There never was a moment of existence in which He did not live. He is eternal. He has always existed and will always exist. That is inconceivable to us but it is nonetheless true. He is eternal, that is to say He was fully God in full essence when nothing existed, therefore He is not something that's part of the created order.

Second, He is immortal. That is He is not subject to mortality. That means to being human, to living and dying as the normal course of mortal life dictates. He is totally transcendent. He has no beginning and no end, always existed, is transcendent beyond anything that is material or mortal that has life or death in terms that we understand. And again he says He is invisible. He is spirit and spirit is immaterial and thus invisible.

In Acts chapter 17 as the Apostle Paul is talking to the Athenian philosophers, he says this about God. "We ought not to think...Acts 17:29...that the divine nature...that is God...is like gold or silver or stone as some image formed by the art and thought of man." God cannot be captured as to His essence in any form. And that's why at the beginning of the Ten Commandments the first commandment is don't make any graven images, don't reduce God to any material form. God is to be worshiped as pure, eternal, immortal, invisible spirit. That is to say He is everywhere at all times in the full essence of His being and we can worship Him anywhere and at any time in that fullness.

You say, "Well what about the tabernacle, what about the temple? Didn't those places have representations of God?" No, they did not. The tabernacle was a tent within a tent. It was a tent that had the Holy of Holies and the holy place, surrounded by a tent that had the outer courtyard area and the only objects in the place were a candelabra that we know about, a laver for washing, some altars for sacrifice, and then the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was a box on the top that had a thing called the Mercy Seat where blood was sprinkled to symbolize atonement. And inside, you remember, the shew bread, Moses' rod that budded and a part of the law of God was held. But that was not a replication of the God who is spirit. There was no idol there...no idol there. And even those symbols so important in Israel's life have disappeared with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. There is no temple and there is no ark and there are no artifacts that go along with that, no altars and places like that. That whole symbolic system never did replicate God, God was never some idol in that place. And it is wrong to conceive of God as somehow being expressed in the image of the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was a box, nothing more. And when God

came down He came down in Shekinah glory above it and was never defined by it.

And today, obviously, that ceremonial system has passed away and God is still spirit. He is still to be worshiped in spirit. It's interesting that Jesus says this because there is a temple at the time in Jerusalem and it has a holy place and it has a Holy of Holies and it has in it the Ark and all that is there and Jesus makes no reference to that other than to say the time is coming when nobody is going to worship there. That place is coming crashing down in a few years. The issue is to worship God as spirit. Now when you're worshiping God as spirit, you're worshiping Him in His essential nature which means that you worship God by honoring Him for all that He is...His omnipotence, His omnipresence, His omniscience that He knows everything, His immutability that He never changes, His eternity that He has always existed and will always exist, and then you can go down the litany of all of His essential attributes, like loving, kindness, goodness, mercy, grace, and you can go to justice, righteousness, wrath, judgment, all those things which make up God who is the great living and eternal spirit. You can extol God for His power in creation and His power in redemption and His power in deliverance and so forth and so on. And that is worshiping God in spirit.

Now a Jew today who is a devout Jew and who tries to follow the Old Testament can worship God as spirit. And that's what they would do. I mean, they go to their temples and they go to their synagogues and they endeavor to worship God. And in the land of Israel, of course, they go to the Wailing Wall and they are endeavoring in their way to worship the true and living God of Israel. They are monotheists, they're not polytheists. They're worshiping the one true God. They are worshiping the God who is defined in the Old Testament, the God whose attributes are revealed through the Psalms and through the prophets and through the holy writings, the hagiographa, the books of history, and through the Pentateuch. They're worshiping the God who is revealed in all of that...they think. At least that's the God they think they're worshiping. But they're not because they're missing an essential component.

Back to John 4, this is very, very basic and must be understood. God must be worshiped, listen, as spirit but He must also be worshiped as Father. He must also be worshiped as Father. You say, "Well the Jews would worship God as the Father in a creative sense." Yes, there are...there are just a very few allusions to God in the Old Testament as Father but there are some and the illusions in the Old Testament or the statements regarding the Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament have to do with Him as Creator, Father in the sense that He progenerated humanity, that He created humanity. It's not an intimate term. It's simply a term of generation, progeneration that He created. And God is also in the Old Testament viewed by the Jews as the Father of Israel. They see Him as the one who brought Israel into existence. In fact, Ezekiel draws a picture of that of how God became sort of the Father who adopted this wayward waif and you have statements in the other books, even in Deuteronomy, that God sees Himself as the one who fathered the nation Israel.

So the Jew would say...Yes, I worship God as the essence of who he is as revealed in the Old Testament, I worship the God whom the Old Testament reveals in all of His attributes. And I worship the God who is Father in the sense that He's the creator of all humanity and particularly He is the Father of His chosen son Israel. But that's not what the issue is here. I want to take you to the issue because it is absolutely crucial.

What does Jesus mean when He says in verse 21, "You shall worship the Father," what does He mean in verse 23, "Worship the Father," what does Jesus mean when He's talking about God as Father? Is He talking about God as the Father of all humanity? Is He talking about God as the Father of Israel? Is He talking about God as the Father of an individual person in some kind of intimate relationship? Answer...none of those...none of those.

What is He speaking about? This is crucial to understanding the gospel of John. This is a major thesis of the gospel of John and a major incarnational truth. Look at chapter 5 of John and it will unfold to you. Here is what Jesus is talking about. And Jesus continually referred to God as His Father...continually. Verse 17, He answered them, "My Father is working until now and I Myself am working." Now mark this, Jesus says My Father works and I work. In verse 19...well, verse 18, "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him because He not only was breaking the sabbath but was calling God...what?...His own Father." Here's the issue, folks. Here's the issue. Whenever Jesus refers to God as Father, He's referring to Him not as the Father of humanity and not as the Father of Israel, but as His own Father.

Why is that important? The Jews knew why it was important. He's claiming, therefore, to bear the same essential nature as God. Just as a son bears the essential nature of his father, so does Jesus bear the essence of the life of God. And the Jews got it. They said He's calling God His own Father, making Himself...what?...equal with God. They said He's putting Himself on equality with God. He's claiming to be of the same nature as God. This is blasphemy to them. But He says it shouldn't be, My Father works and I work. Verse 19, "Truly, truly I say to you, the Son of Man can do nothing of Himself unless it is something He sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner." He...He works, the Father works. What the Father does, He does. The way the Father does it, the way He does it.

Verse 20, "The Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing. Greater works than these will He show Him that you may marvel, for just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. Not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who doesn't honor the Son, doesn't honor the Father who sent Him. Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has eternal life and doesn't come into judgment but is passed out of death into life. Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall hear, for just as the

Father has life in Himself, even so He gives to the Son to have life in Himself. He gave Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man," and so forth.

Verse 30, "I can nothing on My own initiative, as I hear I judge, My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. If I alone bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true, there's another who bears witness of Me and I know the testimony which He bears of Me is true."

You say, "What is He saying here?" Listen to it this way. Verse 17, the Father works and I work. Verse 19, whatever the Father does I do and however the Father does it is the same way I do it. The Father raises the dead, verse 21, and I raise the dead. Verse 22, the Father is the judge but He's given the judgment to Me. Verse 23, "You honor the Son, you honor the Father. If you don't honor the Son, you don't honor the Father. So the honor that goes to the Son goes to the Father and to the Father goes to the Son. Whoever hears the Father's word has eternal life, whoever hears My word has eternal life. The Father has life in Himself, verse 26, and I have life in Myself. The Father has authority to execute judgment, and I have authority to execute judgment. Verse 30, I don't do My own will, I do the same thing that the Father wills. I don't bear testimony to Myself alone but the Father bears testimony to Me as well.

I mean, this is just powerful stuff. Verse 36, "The witness which I have is greater than that of John for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish the very works that I do bear witness of Me that the Father has sent Me." In other words, the works I do, they're the works of the Father. The words I say, they're the words of the Father. Verse 38, "You don't believe His word, you don't have His word abiding in you because you don't believe Him who He sent." My words are His words. My works are His works. My judgment is His judgment. My authority is His authority. My will is His will. My life is His life. That's what He's saying.

How clear is it? One very, very essential element in true worship, you must worship the God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's absolutely essential. You must worship the God who is Father, not just the Father of all creation, not just the Father of Israel, but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the God who is one with Jesus Christ. My glory is His glory, He goes on to say. My name is His name.

Turn to chapter 10 in John. Chapter 10 verse 29, and this is what escalated the hostility of the Jews against Jesus. Verse 29, Jesus said, "My Father who has given them to Me," talking about His sheep, His followers, "is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand," and then He says this, "I and the Father are...what?...are one." And they picked up stones to stone Him for such imaginable blasphemy, just unthinkable blasphemy. Jesus is claiming to be one in essence with God.

In John chapter 17 and verse 5 He says, "Glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." He's saying anticipating the end of His work on earth, Take Me back to the glory I had with You before the world began, give Me back the glory that was Your glory and Mine to share. Verse 11, He talks about the fact that You have given them to Me, end of verse 11, that they may be one even as we are. Again he celebrates His absolute essential unity with God. And down in verse 21, all the way to the end of the chapter, it's the same emphasis, that they may be one, verse 21, even as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee that they also may be in Us. And then in verse 23, "I in them, Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity that the world may know that Thou did send Me and Thou didst love them even as Thou didst love Me, and so forth." The end of verse 26, "That Thou didst love Me may in them and I in them." And all of that intimacy of the relationship of the Father and the Son which we are drawn in to enjoy.

So the point is this, whenever Jesus speaks of God as Father, He's talking about God as Father in the sense that He is deity, that He bears the same essence as God. In fact, in Matthew 11:27 Jesus said this, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son." In other words, there's an interlocking intimacy of knowledge and life that no one outside can know. Again affirming His utter essence as being the same as God Himself.

So when you talk about...when you hear Jesus talk about God as Father, it's not the Father of the world, created humanity; it's not the Father of a nation, Israel; it's not the Father of each individual. People say, "Well I believe God is a loving Father," and so forth, it's not that. When Jesus talks about God as Father, it is as Father in the sense that He is the one who sent into the world Jesus Christ who bears His essential nature. That's what it means. That's the emphasis.

So back to my original illustration. You've got these Jewish people and they say, "Well we worship the God who is revealed in the Old Testament and we worship the God who created the world, and we worship the God who chose His people Israel." The question is, do you worship the God who is the Father and bears the same essence as Jesus Christ? If you don't, all your other worship is a form of blasphemy.

It's a form to understand that because I think some people assume that because they worship the God revealed in Scripture that that gets them into the Kingdom. Not at all. It was their supposed commitment to worship the true God that drove them to execute the Messiah. Worship must include the worship of Jesus Christ as God Himself. Jesus said to Philip, "Have you been so long with us, we've been together all this time...verse 9 of John 14...and you haven't come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has...what?...seen the Father." Why are you asking Me to show you the Father?

So when we worship God, and let's get this right, when we worship God...yes, we worship Him as that eternal spirit in the fullness of all His essential attributes, but also He must be worshiped as the one who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say you cannot worship God unless you worship Him as the God who was revealed in His Son. And to leave that out is to be left with blasphemy. That's why 1 Corinthians 16:22 says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be cursed." "No man comes unto the Father...Jesus said...but by Me, neither is there salvation in any other name, for there's none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Only the name of Jesus Christ.

Now let me show you this in a few of Paul's epistles, how important this becomes as a formula in early Christian theology. Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." That's Philippians 1:3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Second Corinthians chapter 1 verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Philippians chapter 2 verse 11, "That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." In Romans chapter 15 verses 5 and 6, wonderful verse, "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus that with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

You see, you can't glorify just God and stop there. He has to be the God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say is one in essence with the incarnate Son.

Peter was not left out in expressing this. First Peter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." John was not left out, 1 John 1:3, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." And again John writes in his little epistle called 2 John verse 3, "Grace, mercy and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father." And we're back to John 5:23, "If a man doesn't honor the Son, he doesn't...what?...honor the Father."

You cannot worship God as any other than the God who is spirit and the God who is one with Jesus Christ. There is no worship apart from the full recognition of the sovereign lordship and deity of Jesus Christ as one in essence with God the true and living spirit. Thomas was right in John 20:28 when he said, "My Lord and my God." We worship the Father who is incarnate in the Son.

That's what is so essential. God is the source of worship and God is the object of worship, the God who revealed Himself as spirit in all the fullness of His attributes and as the Lord Jesus Christ in incarnation. You can worship the God of the Old Testament your whole life long and die and go to hell if you do not worship Him as the God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the God who is incarnate in Christ. That's who we worship, right? We have come to God through Christ, have we not? We don't have any problem with that. That's why it's so foolish for these people who want to embrace all the people who supposedly worship the same God. If they don't worship the God who is

incarnate in Jesus Christ, their worship is a form of blasphemy.

Now that leaves us to discuss tonight the nature of worship. What does it mean to worship in spirit and truth? We're going to get down to the practical. And what's the key to doing that effectively? Be here tonight at six and we'll finish it up. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You that as we think about this Christmas season we are put in touch again with the great majestic glory of incarnational truth. We are reminded again that our God who is spirit, our God who is the eternal transcendent, immortal, invisible, all wise spirit came into this world in the form of man, came as a baby in Bethlehem to an animal stable and a manger and lived in this world and died incarnate in man for our redemption. We thank You, Lord, for the instruction of Your Word that You cannot accept worship unless that worship acknowledges Jesus Christ, unless it acknowledges that You are incarnate in Christ. You are the God who is spirit and the God who is the Father of the Lord Jesus and we worship You as such. We like the Old Testament Jew can worship You for all the fullness and majesty of Your attributes, and then in perfect completion worship You revealed in the New Testament in Jesus Christ.

Father, thank You for making us true worshipers and for reminding us again this morning and particularly at this season that our call is to worship the Christ who was born that we might live, and that we might know You and that we might worship You in time and throughout eternity. I pray, Lord, that no one here would be struggling to worship You but utterly unable and be utterly rejected because they didn't come to You as the God who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, one in essence with Him. Father, bring many to Christ and thus to Yourself that they might express true worship for Your glory we pray. Amen.

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