

Understanding Worship – Part Three

September 5th, 2010

Adapted from John Herbert's Notes; Presented by Ralph Alley

1). Let's begin by reading our foundational Scripture passage in the gospel of John. This is an account of an encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

John 4:19-26

The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

So far in this series, we've come to see that our traditional idea of worship, that which some equate with the singing of songs that produces emotions, and that which is presented in scripture concerning worship, are not one and the same.

- This is not to say that we shouldn't sing or get emotional during the Sunday service.
- We shouldn't be deceived into thinking that just because we sing a 'worship song,' that we are automatically engaged in worship. We may at that moment be worshippers or we may not – it has nothing to do with the song itself.

2). We had seen that in both the O/T and the N/T that the word 'worship' is a translation of a word that means to bow low to the ground, to prostrate oneself in homage to –

- The idea expressed through the word 'worship' is the recognition by the one 'worshipping' of the superiority of the one being worshipped. There is in the action of prostration the implicit idea of the will of the worshipper being subjected to, and therefore becoming the same as, that of the one being worshipped. The act of worship then becomes the voluntary declaration of obedience on the part of the one who perceives himself as the lesser towards the one he sees as the greater.
- We saw this to be true of Abraham, of Mary and of the Apostles in respect of God – all of whom chose to be the bondservant of their Master and were therefore worshippers.

- Remembering that a bondservant is someone who has the legal right to their own freedom, but who chooses instead to give up their freedom to serve their master in complete subjection of their will to his.
 - And this is an attitude that must be true of us also if we are to engage in worship.
- 3). We also saw through the type picture of Abraham and Isaac, and Moses and Pharaoh, that in order to ‘worship’ properly, one must go on a three days’ journey *first*.

- Abraham journeyed three days to get to the place where he offered his son as a burnt offering to God, in faithful obedience to what God had told him to do.
- Moses and his people wanted to sacrifice to the Lord, but were told to make a three days’ journey out of Egypt in order to do so. We see this in –

Exodus 5:2-5

And Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go." 3 ¶ So they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." 4 Then the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor." 5 And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor!"

- And we also noted that Pharaoh, who is a type of the god of this world (Egypt being a type of the world), did not want Israel to make the three day’s journey so that they could offer sacrifices, because he did not want them to have ‘rest.’ This is an obvious reference for us to the Day of Rest, the Seventh Day, the Millennial Kingdom.
- And in the book of beginnings, Genesis, we saw the land coming up out of a place of death, by the power of the Spirit, on the third day, in order to produce fruit.
- That which is typified for us in the three days’ journey is death, resurrection, and then fruitfulness, all done by the power of the Spirit, on the third day.
- So we see that the idea of ‘worshipping’ the Lord is shown to us as an offering of a sacrifice, done in faithful obedience to God’s Word, by the power of the Spirit, all of which takes place after we have made our “three days’ journey.” Now for us this does not speak of a literal three days or a physical journey, but the present continuous process of dying to our flesh and walking in the spirit – and the length of our journey, characterized as three days, will be the course of our Christian life from the point of our eternal salvation (the receiving of the free gift) to our physical death or rapture.

- And in doing all of this, we would indeed be the true worshippers of John Chapter 4, worshipping 'in spirit and truth.'

4). For the most part, it is much easier for us to do something *for God* rather than *become* something. For example, it is much easier to sing a worship song than it is to die to self and thereby worship through obedience, and there is something within all of us that would rather sing the song than do the dying – it may be that over the years 'church' has taught us that it is necessary to produce an outward 'performance' that can be seen by those around us as a demonstration of our spirituality or even our salvation, rather than an inward struggle that no one but the Lord sees.

- But let's read what we find in Hebrews –

Hebrews 10:5-9

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. 7 ¶ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come--In the volume of the book it is written of Me--To do Your will, O God.'" 8 Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), 9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second.

- Christ came in fulfillment of the Law, and His sacrifice fulfilled all other sacrifices. Note the way in which Christ's sacrifice is characterized for us here – 'I have come to do Your will O God.' The sacrifice of obedience as divine worship modeled by Christ replaces the performance of ritual: i.e., the dying to self supersedes the singing of the song as the act of worship. One is outward and the other is inward. In our example, the singing of a song may denote no more than an outward change that can be manufactured to suit the circumstances; whereas the act of worship through faithful obedience in dying to self can only be realized through the inward change – the 'metamorphosis'.
 - In the same way as the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin in the OT economy, only the blood of Christ could achieve that, so our sin nature cannot be dealt with through ritual, but only by following Christ's example in subjecting ourselves to the will of God, thereby producing the metamorphosis.
 - And from our perspective, doing the will of God, of necessity, requires the death of our own will.
- He has taken away the first, that typified by worship through religious ritual within the temple in Jerusalem – that which is just outward show – and replaced it with

doing the will of God...worship that is to take place within each individual, within the temple of God -

1Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

- By the time of Christ's earthly ministry, the Glory of the Lord had long since departed from Israel's Temple in Jerusalem.
- Because of the nation's continual disobedience (their refusal to subject themselves to the will of God) the presence of God left the Temple, and will not return until the time of the Millennial Kingdom.
- Interestingly, the Lord during His earthly ministry (God present amongst His people once again) never went beyond the outer courts of the Temple. He never entered the Temple itself.
- When the veil was torn from top to bottom at the time of the crucifixion, it revealed graphically that God was not there.
- Yet despite Israel's disobedience and lack of repentance and the departure of God's presence, the performance of the religious rituals of the Law of Moses was continued.
- Isn't this really what we find in the Laodecian church of this dispensation, a church that believes itself to be rich and in need of nothing and yet is poor, blind, miserable and naked - with Christ no longer present, but standing outside the door and knocking?
- A church in disobedience to the commands of Christ and yet still going through the motions as if everything is OK.

5). So now let's look at another example concerning doing the will of God -

1Samuel 15:3

'Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'

- We are looking here at the Lord's command to Saul (Israel's first king) with respect to the utter destruction of Amalek.

- The Amalekites were the first nation to attack Israel when they came out of Egypt, and were descendants of Esau's grandson. And as such, are characterized through Esau – a man of the flesh who despised his birthright.
- In God's command, which is of course the expression of His will, to utterly destroy Amalek we can see a picture for us – with regards to God's will for us – *to utterly destroy the man of flesh*, the one whom Amalek typifies.

Colossians 3:5

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Romans 8:13

For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Luke 9:23

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

6). Now, in the light of all we have looked at, we will see that as Saul would carry out the will of God – by destroying Amalek – so he would be performing an act of worship. Let's look at what happened –

1Samuel 15:16-26

Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak on." 17 So Samuel said, "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel? 18 "Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' 19 "Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?" 20 And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 "But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal." 22 Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king." 24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 "Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." 26 But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with

you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."

- The consequence of Saul's failure to obey God is striking – the position of rulership that should have been his is taken from him and he is rejected by God.
- And did you note the reason for his disobedience? 'Because I feared the people'. Can you see the echoes of Aaron at Sinai?
 - Moses, from their perspective, was delayed on the mountain and they didn't know what had become of him, so they had their religious leaders make a molded calf which they called 'elohyim' (the same name they used for God), 'that brought them out of the land of Egypt'.
 - They hadn't stopped believing there was a God, rather they wanted God on their terms, rather than they being on His. They were, in their own minds, sacrificing to God, but they hadn't gone very far away. This was out of their flesh, not out of obedience, and what they believed to be worship was in fact idolatry.
- And our scripture continues –

1Samuel 15:30-33

Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God." 31 So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD. 32 ¶ Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." 33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

- Saul returns to 'worship the Lord', but please note his motivation for this...*that he might have honor before the elders of his people and before Israel*. This is no more than the performance of a religious ritual, in the flesh – Saul calls it 'worship' but it has nothing to do with obedience to the word of the Lord. It is not born out of repentance, but out of a desire to save face before the people. In fact, we would need to see this not as worship but as idolatry.
- Because if it was born out of repentance, he would have changed his mind with regards to his action, and carried out the Lord's commandment to him.
- It is Samuel who actually performs the act of worship, by fulfilling God's will, by hacking Agag to pieces before the Lord.

- And we will remember that it was an Amalekite, one of those who should have been utterly destroyed, who killed Saul and took the crown from his head.
- And so for us, we should be thinking of the warning from the book of Revelation –

Revelation 3:11

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

7). The lessons for us here should be obvious. It must be our determination to utterly destroy our man of flesh. Now this is not a onetime event but a continual process, but nevertheless this should be our aim. And we are to do this in faithful obedience to God's command as we look to the hope out ahead of us. And failure to do so will inevitably lead to the loss of our crown in that Day.

- And as with Samuel and Agag, we are to use the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God to accomplish this –

Hebrews 4:11-12

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

- And when we find that we have left Agag alive, which we will often do, then there is something that we can do about it. (Continuing in our Hebrews scripture) –

Hebrews 4:13-16

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. 14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- In the recognition of our sin, and in the midst of our weakness, we go to our High Priest in repentance, from whom we will then receive mercy and from whom we will receive grace to help. And as we do this, believing what God has said about submitting our will to His, so we perform an act of worship –

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. [The word translated as 'service' here is the Greek word 'latreia,' which means 'worship.']

- This is all part and parcel of making our three day journey.
- 8). As we come to present ourselves before the Lord with a song on our lips, it is neither the song nor the context in which it is sung that constitutes an act of worship. Rather it is the condition of our heart that determines whether we worship God or not.

John 4:23-24

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."