

Understanding Worship – Part Two

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

1). We'll begin by reading our foundational Scripture passage that is the basis of our "Worship" series –

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."

In our first part of this series, we had come to see that our traditional idea of worship (that which some think is expressed through the singing of a particular type of song causing a particular type of emotion) 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.
- The point in this message series on 'worship' is to make sure that our understanding of worship is scriptural in its foundation, so that we will not be deceived into thinking we are doing something we are not.
 - Such a deception would be unprofitable for us.
- 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' was a translation of a word that means to bow low to the ground, to prostrate oneself in homage to something or someone else–

- O/T - *shachah* = to depress, i.e. prostrate (especially reflexive, in homage to royalty or God):--bow (self) down, crouch, fall down (flat), humbly beseech, , do reverence, make to stoop, worship.

- N/T - *proskuneo* = from 4314 and a probable derivative of 2965 (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); to fawn or crouch to, i.e. (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore):--worship.
- What we see here in the use of these words to describe 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 -

1Peter 2:15-16

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

3). Let's take another look at the passage from last week, concerning Abraham's sacrifice of his son -

Genesis 22:4-8

Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." 6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. 7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

- To review, what we see here is that worship has to do with faithful obedience to the Word of God. Abraham's act of offering his son was in response to what God had said -

Genesis 22:2

Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

- Let's note that Abraham's faithful obedience is represented through the action of making a journey and a sacrifice. And through God's own commentary, is also inextricably linked to resurrection –

Hebrews 11:17-19

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

- Now notice this carefully. Abraham makes a three days' journey in order to offer the sacrifice, in order to perform his act of worship.
 - And the connection between "three days" and resurrection should be unmistakable, and should be, in fact, an "a-ha" moment of clarity for each one of us.

4). The idea of resurrection and the third day being connected begins in foundation for us in the beginning of God's word –

Genesis 1:9-13

Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. 10 And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 So the evening and the morning were the third day.

- Notice what we see here. The earth comes from beneath the water, out of the place of death, in resurrection so to speak, by the power of the Spirit **on the third day** and is then fruitful.
- We also see the connection with Jonah –

Jonah 1:17

Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

- Jonah is in the belly of the fish, the place of death, and is vomited onto dry land on the third day, in a picture of resurrection, by the power of the Spirit and is then fruitful, bringing Nineveh to repentance.

Acts 10:40

"Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

- Again, Christ comes from the place of death on the third day, in resurrection, by the power of the Spirit, in order to be "fruitful" -

1Corinthians 15:20

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

- To repeat the order here: Christ died...was resurrected...THEN there's a connection with "fruit."

5). What we see in all these examples is the fact that it is only by the power of the Spirit, through resurrection, that fruitfulness can take place. All of which is connected with the third day.

- It is only when we have died, through the death of our old man - our dying to our flesh, that we are able to produce anything of value in the spiritual realm.
 - And just to reflect on past teachings, this is the picture that is painted for us concerning baptism.
- Only that which is done in the spirit can produce fruit - only that done in the spirit is acceptable to God.
- And this process is typified in our Genesis 22 scripture as a "three days' journey."

Remember - John 4:24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

- That which is done in the spirit can only be done in the power of resurrection, never in the flesh.
- And the three days' journey is to be made before worship can take place.

6). Now let's observe the children of Israel -

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!"

- God had commanded Israel to make a three days' journey into the wilderness so as to offer sacrifices.
- Can you see what is happening here? In order to make sacrifices, to perform an act of worship through obedience to God's command (which must involve death through sacrifice), they are to make a three days' journey *first*. Then, only after having made the journey would they then be in a position to worship without the Lord falling upon them 'with pestilence or with the sword'.
- This is an identical picture to that which we saw with respect to Abraham and Isaac.
- And the three day's journey again speaks of death, burial and resurrection – the sacrifices to be made, the act of worship to be performed, only on the third day – by the power of the Spirit. By the express command of God.

7). And notice something else from our Exodus scripture. Pharaoh, who is a type of the god of this world (Egypt being a type of the world), does not want Israel to make the three day's journey so that they can offer sacrifices, because he does not want them to have 'rest.' This is an obvious reference for us to the Day of Rest, the Seventh Day, the Millennial Kingdom.

- Do you see this? The three day's journey = producing acceptable sacrifices (which is a facet of the idea of worship), which then equals 'rest.'
- So then, *not* making the three day's journey would mean no acceptable sacrifices, no rest. It would mean staying in bondage under Pharaoh, and laboring in his field.
- And Pharaoh does not want them to go. So what would this mean for us? Simply that the god of this world does not want us to make the three day's journey either, because he knows that if we do make that journey we will offer acceptable sacrifices, we will die to our flesh, we will become true worshippers and our faithful obedience will result in us taking the Kingdom, and entering into the Rest.

- If we do not make the journey, there will be no acceptable sacrifices and therefore no rest. We would allow ourselves to remain in bondage to sin and find ourselves laboring in Satan's field instead of Christ's.

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

- Clearly then, if we are to be the true worshippers of John Chapter 4 and worship 'in spirit and truth,' we have to make the three days' journey also.
- 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 initial salvation (the receiving of the free gift) to our physical death or rapture.

1Peter 2:11

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

Galatians 5:24

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

8). Now we have not quite finished with Pharaoh and Moses yet. Look what we find later in Exodus (after Moses brings plagues on the land of Egypt, causing Pharaoh to give in (sort of) to his demands)-

Exodus 8:2-28

"We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He will command us." 28 And Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away.

- Again, we see the three days' journey to offer sacrifices, to perform worship through faithful obedience to the command of God.
- But now see Pharaoh's compromise. Do whatever you want to do for God, but don't go very far away - do it without making the three days' journey.
- They could have gone and sacrificed animals until they were knee deep in blood, but without travelling the three days first, none of it would have been acceptable to God.

- For us we can call it worship, call it praise, call it what you like, but without the three days' journey made first, it's nothing but hot air.

9). We see the same thought from a slightly different perspective with Israel at Sinai –

Exodus 24:13-14

So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. 14 And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them."

Exodus 32:1-6

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2 And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 "So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" 5 So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." 6 Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

- 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.

10). Now Christ has also gone up to the mountain, and also gave a command before leaving –

Luke 19:13

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

- For many, though, it appears as if He is delayed...and they have wondered, 'where is the promise of His coming?'
- As a result we find -

2Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

- Do you recall where the gold came from for the molded calf? From their ears.
- And here is our warning -

1Corinthians 10:6-7

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

- The question is, is the church at large following the command of Luke 19 – "Occupy 'til I come." – or has it sat down to eat and drink, and risen up to play... and fashioned for itself a molded calf to worship?
- And if so, what happened to that first generation when Moses returned from the mountain? What will happen when Jesus returns?

(We can answer those questions tonight.)