

## Authentic Worship

### Pt 1

What comes to mind when you think about worship? John MacArthur calls worship “our ultimate priority”; David Jeremiah calls worship “my heart’s desire”; A.W. Tozer calls it “the missing jewel”; Tony Evans “worship is foundational to everything else in the Christian life”. We find expressions of worship from Genesis to Revelation. For instance Abraham stated as he took Isaac off to the mountain that he was going off “to worship” – Gen.22:5; numerous Psalms exhort us to worship:

*Ps.95:6 Come let us worship and bow down. Let’s kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand*

*Ps.29:2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*

*Ps.99:5, 9 Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool; Holy is he...Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his holy hill for the Lord our God is holy.*

Jesus declaring to Satan in Matt.4:10 ... *You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only.* God is seeking worshippers, those who worship in spirit and in truth – John 4:23-24. The book of Revelation begins and ends with worship.

If you were to go through the Bible to see what worship involves, you would find it involves things like singing, praying, clapping, praising, shouting, weeping, laughing, kneeling, saying “amen,” speaking, listening, reciting, giving, sitting in silence, chanting, lifting up the hands, standing, lying prostrate on the floor, beating the chest, crying, sharing a meal together, sharing testimonies, reading Scripture, joining hands, singing in the choir, listening to the choir, playing cymbals, horns, bells, pipes, trumpets, and even dancing. Defining worship by its expressions is challenging.

Even today for some worship is joyful singing; for others it is silent meditation; still others say worship happens in the building while for others it happens in nature; for some it is where God meets us while others say it is where we meet with God; for some the externals matter while for others they have no value at all; for some it requires quiet reflective time while for others it requires joyful singing and verbal praise; what seems to pass for worship in one culture is merely religious activity in another.

Then if you study theologians and look for their definition of worship you get things like: worship is the celebration of God for who he is and what he has done; worship is an act of reverence by man to God in response to revelation of God’s person and works expressed by offering sacrifices; worship is the strategy by which we interrupt our preoccupation with ourselves and attend to the presence of God.

So with all that being said how do we know if we are actually worshipping God? How can we who are alive today worship God? Over the next 4 weeks we will attempt to answer that question as we examine the topic of Authentic Worship.

This morning I want us to focus on the idea that we were created to worship. Just as the angels worship God in glory; just as Adam and Eve were created to worship so we having been born again, made new creatures in Christ are designed to be worshippers of God. Let’s begin in 1 Peter 2.

## **I. We are People who Belong to God      1 Peter 2:9**

The old KJ translation of 1 Pet.2:9 – *for you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people...*

NASV reads: *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

The Greek word translated “peculiar” is “peripoiesis” and literally means “possession, one’s own property”. Hence why the NASV translates this phrase, “*a people for God’s own possession.*” The NIV says, “*a people belonging to God,*” and the NKJV says, “*His own special people.*”

We, as believers in Jesus Christ, are the personal possession of God. He made us new creations in Christ Jesus and then put a circle of ownership around us to indicate that “*these people belong to Me.*”

Who owns you? God does. How much is something worth if God paid for it and owns it? Priceless! Note how similar this text is to Ex.19:3-6 and God’s call to Israel.

One might ask “Why?” Why has he made us active participants in his program? Why has he affirmed our value to him as chosen, royal, holy, prized, and belonging to him? We don’t have to travel far to answer that question, just note the conclusion to the verse: “So that”- here is the reason or purpose behind God’s choice and actions on our behalf. We are to “proclaim, declare” the excellencies or virtues, moral goodness of God. That means we are to make them known, advertise or publish the virtues of God’s character.

The Greek word is “*exangello*” meaning: 1) to tell forth 2) to declare abroad, divulge, publish 3) to make known by praising or proclaiming, to celebrate. The word or derivatives of the word are used to express verbal proclamation such as in declaring the message of the gospel to the more liturgical type of proclamation which results from the sacred celebration of the Lord’s Supper: *for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim (katangello) the Lord’s death until he comes* 1 Cor.11:26. Worship, the partaking of communion is a proclamation of who God is and what he has done for us in his death and resurrection along with the promises of his return.

This is our job description, our calling. We are left here on earth to proclaim how excellent is the Lord – how virtuous and good God is. It’s all about God and what he has done for us.

You know what the best way to do so is? Worship God! For when we worship God we declare his worth; we declare our allegiance, we show forth his name and character. Worship is what we were created for, what God designed us to do and what is our ultimate priority.

D. Jeremiah: *Throughout the Bible we find that worship is no more an option than eating or breathing. Stop doing either of those and you’ll die physically. Stop worshipping and you’ll surely die spiritually...if you don’t worship – and I mean truly worship, not simply attend a weekly service – you’ll never experience God. It’s that simple. (My Heart’s Desire, pg. 51).*

Worship is first and foremost all about God. That is true in both corporate and private worship. We will look at this more in the weeks to come. For now focus on the fact that because we are God’s possession, because we belong to him we are created to worship him.

## **II. Worship is our Purpose**

### **A. Worship Permeates Heaven**

Job 38:5-7 – the angelic hosts worship God, give him praise at creation

Neh. 9:6 - the hosts of heaven worship God

Is. 6:3; Rev.4:6-9 – the primary ministry of angels is to worship God

### **B. Worship Defines Israel as a Nation**

Ex.3:12 – when God calls Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt he also tells him what the people are to do once they are out of slavery

Ex. 20:2-5 – once in the Promised Land the guidelines for living well call for and regulate worship.

Deut. 6:4-5 – the call to Israel is to worship God is repeated in the great shema

The Tabernacle was designed only for worship. It was the place where God met with his people. So much so that the incense used in the worship is holy as well – Ex. 30:35-38.

When the next generation entered the Promised Land God gave them a simple formula to guarantee his blessing – worship God acceptably. Deut 26:8-10

### **C. Worship is the Hallmark of the Believer**

Matt.4:10 where Jesus defeats Satan he declares the only God is to be worshiped. Worship is not optional. It is our purpose and marks us out as belonging to God – 1 Pet.2:9. Worship is what God is seeking from his people – John 4. We will look at this text in more detail next week but note that if God is seeking worshippers then worship must be significant to God and to us.

Worship goes way beyond what we do in church – it is our life - Rom.12:1. It is reasonable in light of God's mercies that I worship God with the presentation of my body for then what I do with my body (and I can't do anything w/o it) will be to the glory of God. If I do everything to the glory of God then in the process I declare God's character and works thereby worshipping Him.

## **III. Worship is Our Ultimate Priority**

*Psalm 95:6-7 Come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Psalm 29:2 says: "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness".*

Clearly the supreme duty of the creature for all time and eternity is to worship the Creator. John MacArthur: *"Worship is to the Christian life what the mainspring is to the watch, what the engine is to a car. It is the very core, the most essential element. Worship cannot be isolated or regulated to just one place, time, or segment of our lives. We cannot verbally thank and praise God while living lives of selfishness and carnality. That kind of worship is a perversion. Real acts of worship must be the overflow of a worshipping life."*

One writer summed it up this way: *Worship is not a human invention; rather, it is a divine invitation. God has taken the initiative to send the invitation of love and grace in the person of JC with an R.S.V.P. and worship is our reply.*

Invitations are **powerful** things. They make us feel wanted, included, important, even **loved**. The very nature of an invitation is the expressed desire another person has to be with you, to interact with you, to be known in greater ways by you, to have the opportunity to share life with you for a particular reason.

So what if we come to realize that worship is actually an invitation? How could it change our understanding and participation in worship each day or each week be that private or corporate? Would we come with more expectant hearts? Would we come with the mindset, not of performers to be evaluated, not as consumers coming to be entertained, but rather as invited guests—participants called and desired by God to be in communion with him?

#### **IV. Worship is What Jesus Seeks**

The familiar story in John 4 where Jesus converses with the Samaritan woman at the well tells us that God is looking for people to worship him, not just in church but anywhere.

The means of worship is “in the spirit” meaning that worship flows from the inside out. We are said to be involved *wholeheartedly*. Therefore, to worship “in spirit” means that our worship must be genuine and heart-felt.

However we not only worship in spirit but also in truth. Truth is at the heart of worship. Only truth reveals who we are to worship. The God we worship must be the true God. He must be the God who actually exists – the true and living God. It is the truth about God as revealed in His word. It is not what we think about God, but God as He is. The more we know of God the deeper and richer our worship.

#### **Conclusion**

Jesus is seeking for us to be wholeheartedly truthful worshipers because worshiping God is our ultimate priority and our purpose for being.

Warren Wiersbe in Real Worship: It Will Transform Your Life: “*We worship God because He commands us to do so and because worship is the highest and holiest experience of the Christian. God is worthy of our worship and that is all we really need to know*”. Worship is not for us – it’s not what we get out of it – it’s what we give to God. And God is worthy of our very very best thought and action.

Return to 1 Pet.2:9 *You are...so that you declare his worth*. Worship God! Worship of God is our purpose, our priority and what God seeks. Therefore let’s worship God!