



QUEST LESSON F-13

WORSHIP

The Problem: What is involved in Christian worship? There are many religions in the world, and each of them practices a different style of worship. What kind of worship is requested by the Christian God?

The very first presupposition to Christian worship is acknowledgment that God (including the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) is our Creator. There are various reasons that motivate people of different religions to worship their particular deity. Christians do not worship God because they want to placate or appease Him. They do not worship to convince Him that He should be kind to them and give them whatever they want. Their worship is based on a simple faith that He made them. They are His property, and they are totally reliant upon His power to live in the manner for which He created them.

Christian worship is thus based on an awareness of God's infinite love for the creatures of His hand. No one enjoys worshiping a deity who has to be convinced that he should love mankind. The fact that our God loves supremely those whom He has made is the very basis of our confidence in Him and desire to worship Him. A child who is conscious of his parents' love for him has no difficulty in giving love, honor, and obedience in return. As Christ's children, we have no difficulty in praising Him for His wonderful kindness to us, and His constant provision for all of our spiritual, emotional and material needs.

But exactly how does He want us to show our adoration? What kind of worship does He want? In the Middle Ages some monks prayed six or seven times a day. They shut themselves away from the world, as they still do today, and spent their whole lives in acts of devotion. Is that what the Lord tells us to do? At the other end of the scale, there are many people today who are convinced that they can be religious without going to church. They don't like organized religion and they think they don't need the church. Most people who talk that way spend very little time studying their Bibles and praying. In fact, the Bible kind of Christianity is not what they mean by religion. They think they can be all that it is necessary for a human being to be in terms of love, honesty, and goodness without having the constant companionship of Jesus Christ. Needless to say, the Bible condemns that approach as quite impossible. Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), and the Apostle Paul acknowledged, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 13), People who deny their dependence upon Christ are underestimating the power of the devil and his demons. Religion without Christ has no power to save from sin, or to make a person righteous in the eyes of God.

Let us turn now to the Bible, acknowledging Christ as our Creator and Savior, and put to Him the question we are asking. How does He want us to worship Him?

Objectives

First, we consider worship as the supreme expression of love to God.

Second, we note the Bible teaching regarding personal, private worship.

Third, we see what the Bible says about family worship. Fourth, we study what is involved in worshipping in God's house.

Fifth, we shall discover that part of the last-day message to the world is a call to true worship of the Creator.

I. Worship The Supreme Expression Of Love To God

Christian worship is loving communication between Christ and His people. Two people who love one another find all kinds of interesting things to say to one another. Because Jesus loves us and we love Him, communication in worship is a delightful expression of our mutual love.

The Word

1. What kind of worship does God seek from His people? John 4:23-24,
2. How will a sense of the greatness and majesty of God influence our worship? Psalm 99:1-3; Isaiah 57:15.
3. What attitude to God is the most important element in worship? Psalm 18:1-3; 40:16-17; 91:14-16.

Explanation: Worship "in spirit" is impossible unless the Holy Spirit is living in your heart. Worship in truth is possible when God's truth has been accepted and is being applied in the life. Jesus explained to the woman of Samaria the most important elements of Christian worship. Only the totally surrendered believer in Christ can worship Him in spirit and in truth, because only such a person can experience true communication with the divine Lord. Unless there is a marriage of spirits, ours with Christ's, there can be no genuine adoration. To deny some aspect of Christ's truth, as taught in His Word, is to create a barrier between oneself and Christ, and so to render impossible genuine heart to heart communication with Him in worship.

The Christian worshiper acknowledges God's majesty, His glory, and power. The worshiper will not live in fear of God, but He will show the greatest reverence for His holiness, and will speak His name with a sense of awe. The human creature will manifest a very humble attitude in the presence of His all-powerful Creator.

The Psalmist was an authority on worship. He called upon the Lord with confidence because he loved Him. Love was the basis of His praise for God, and the foundation of his willingness to follow His divine counsels. Worship to David was the expression of a divine-human love relationship. And that is exactly what it must be to us.

Relevance: If you love Christ with all your heart, reverence His holiness and majesty, receive His Spirit and truth into the recesses of your being, you will be able to worship Him in just the way His Word suggests.

II. Personal Worship

The personal, private worship of the Christian is essential as a preparation for public worship. Family and church worship are very vital, as we shall see. But they cannot compensate for a lack of private devotional life.

The Word

4. What did Jesus teach in regard to regular private worship? Matthew 6:5-6.
5. What kind of private worship experience did Daniel enjoy every day; even in times of crisis? Daniel 6:10.
6. Describe Jesus' private devotional life. Mark 1:35; 6:46-47; Luke 6:12.
7. What place does Bible study have in our private worship? Romans 15:4; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:15.

Explanation: The purpose of worship, whether public or private, is not that we might convince people that we are holy. Jesus deplored the public pseudo-piety of the Pharisees. He urged the people to have their own private devotions. He instructed each individual to go into his own private room, shut the door, and pray directly to his heavenly Father.

This is exactly what Daniel had done years before. He had a room where he customarily prayed three times a day. He did not open the windows so that people could see him. But he "was not about to change his custom when the officials of the Persian Empire chose to spy on him. Regular worship of His Creator was the secret of Daniel's spiritual power and efficiency as the servant of a series of monarchs.

Jesus practiced what He preached! The story of His worship life is inspiring. He constantly reserved some time during which He could be alone for prayer and study. The more busy He became the more intense was His devotional life. Jesus

lived between the mountain and the multitude. His strength for ministry to others came from those hours spent alone with His Father in prayer.

The Bible should be studied as the voice of God to our hearts. Our private worship time each day should involve reading and study of the Scriptures. They were written so that we "might have hope" (Romans 15:4). At every stage of life, in good times and hard times, the Bible gives us comfort and hope for the future. The Christians in Berea were very faithful in daily Bible study (Acts 17:11). Timothy had studied the Bible ever since childhood, and had found constant spiritual strength and wisdom for the challenges of everyday life. When we listen to God's voice through His written Word we are engaging in an act of worship.

Relevance: Our spiritual life will be strong if we practice regular private worship. This is the basis of true happiness in life, for as we receive grace from Christ we are enabled to relate successfully to people and situations in everyday existence.

III. Family Worship

It is the responsibility of the head of every family to lead His family in daily worship. This does not have to become a burden. It is to be a happy time when parents and children sing praises to God, read a little from His Word, and pray together. This was the secret of family unity for the patriarchs of old, and it is still just as effective today.

The Word

8. For what reason did God give special praise to Abraham? Genesis 18:19.
9. How did Abraham lead his family in worship wherever he went? Genesis 12:7-8; 13:18; 26:25.
10. What did Job do for his children? Job 1:5.

Explanation: God praised Abraham because he led His family in worship. Wherever Abraham went he built altars to God. It was the custom to worship at these altars morning and evening. Abraham's devotion to the Lord involved faithfulness to his function of priest of his own household. Never could his children say that they had not been given a spiritual home and a religious training.

Job also prayed for his children. The patriarchs of old were most faithful in leading their families in the ways of the Lord. And daily family worship services were quite customary.

Relevance: There is great blessing in coming together as a family every day for Bible reading and prayer. When there are young children in the family it is possible either to tell simply Bible stories, or read from an easy to understand book that presents the message of Scripture; like Arthur Maxwell's Bible Story. Older children and youth like to hear the words of Scripture also, and to enter into meaningful discussion. Family worship should not be so long that it becomes a burden or a bore. It should be a time when the

family pray together over their problems and seek the Lord's answer to questions that have arisen. Regular daily worship will bind the family together in Christ. There will be more love and less suspicion, more understanding and less conflict.

IV. Worship In God's House

Worship in church with those who believe as we do is a wonderful privilege that the Bible teaches the Christian should not neglect.

The Word

11. How regular should we be in worshipping with other believers? Hebrews 10:25.
12. What did Jesus do regularly on the Sabbath day? Luke 4:16.
13. What principles should we keep in mind in our prayers offered in church? Matthew 6:7-8; 1 Kings 8:54; Psalm 95:6; 67:3.

14. In what other ways should we praise the Lord in worship? Psalm 149:1; 150:1-6.
15. Why is preaching an important part of worship? 1 Corinthians 1:18; Luke 3:18; Acts 20:2.
16. Who should always be at the center of the sermon? 2 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 1:23.
17. How important is reverence in God's house? Ecclesiastes 5:1-2.

Explanation: We are urged to be regular in our church attendance (Hebrews 10:25). When we neglect to worship with those of like faith, it is very easy to grow weak and careless spiritually. We need the fellowship and love of other Christians. Jesus went regularly to the synagogue on the Sabbath day; it was his custom to worship His Father on His special day.

An important part of public worship is prayer. Jesus instructed that we should not try to impress with flowing language and long prayers. God wants us to express simply the love and longing that is in our hearts. Where and when possible we should kneel to pray in our public worship services. The Bible does not teach that it is wrong to stand or remain sitting in some situations. But as far as possible we should follow the injunction, "Let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Psalm 95:6). Praise is a vital element of prayer. When we keep asking for what we want and neglect to thank God for his manifold blessings, we fail to enter into the full joy of worship. Praise in worship is a recognition that we love God and are deeply grateful for all that He has done and is doing for us.

Music is mentioned in Scripture as a delightful way to praise God in worship. When the music is consistent with the purity of the Gospel, it is especially enjoyable as a worshipful expression of our love for the Lord. Music that suggests the things of the world, and that points away from Christ, should never be used in worship services.

Preaching, which the Bible sometimes refers to as exhortation, is an essential part of public worship. Paul and the other apostles used preaching and teaching as the means of winning converts all over the Roman Empire. Before them Jesus had spent a good part of His ministry teaching the people. Sometimes large numbers would come to Him for light and encouragement, and Jesus never disappointed them. John the Baptist was a great preacher to whom multitudes were attracted, and who was used to win many to repentance. Christ should be the main theme of every discourse. His love and salvation should be upheld to the people as the only hope of eternal life. It is possible to take every doctrine of the Bible and preach it in a Christ-centered way.

As we come to public worship, it is important to remember that we are in the presence of God. Needless talking can drive away the atmosphere of worship and grieve away the Holy Spirit. We should gently but firmly train our children to be reverent, and we should give our full attention to every part of the service. We come to worship the Lord not to adore a preacher. But his words may come to us as manna from heaven, and we can be greatly built up in the faith.

Relevance: Are you ready to follow the Bible counsel and worship regularly in God's house with His people? It is the Lord who is inviting you to be an active part of His church. What blessings there are for you as you respond to His invitation!

V. The Advent Message A Call To Worship

The last-day message for the world includes an invitation to worship the Creator.

The Word

18. What does the first angel's message instruct us to do? Revelation 14:7.
19. What false worship must we beware of in these last days? Revelation 13:15.
20. What wonderful blessings are promised to those who reserve the Sabbath as a special day of worship? Isaiah 58:13-14,

Explanation: The first angel's message includes the invitation, "Worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7). This means worshiping Christ on the Sabbath day. He is the Creator and the Sabbath is the memorial of His creative work (Exodus 20:8-11). Since this first angel's message is spoken of as "the everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6), the message of worship on the Sabbath day is a vital part of the gospel. The

Sabbath is the day on which, in a very special sense, the Lord comes down to meet with His worshiping people, and lifts them up to fellowship with Him.

The false worship of the "image of the beast" (Revelation 13:15) is Satan's counterfeit of true Christian worship. Sunday worship is not taught in the Bible. Sunday is never spoken of in Scripture as a day to be set apart for worship. Sunday is just like Monday, Tuesday, and every other day of the week. But Saturday, the seventh day, is the day which Jesus kept, and which He instructed His followers to keep until His second coming (Matthew 24:20). It is impossible for those who worship the "image of the beast" to enter into fellowship with Jesus, because they are not worshiping as Jesus instructs. This does not mean that today all Sunday keepers are lost. It simply means that when the image of the beast is established, as we believe it will be in the near future, those who accept this false worship in place of the true Bible Sabbath worship will be rejected of God. Those who receive His seal (Revelation 7:1-3) are those who come out of "Babylon" (Revelation 18:1-4), take Jesus into their hearts, obey His law through the power of His indwelling Spirit, and worship Him on the seventh day which He has set apart as a day of rest and spiritual devotion.

Relevance: Will you join us in accepting this great second advent message, and worship with us on Christ's holy day? The promises to those who accept Jesus and worship as He instructs are very wonderful indeed. He says, "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah 58:14). Jesus wants you, dear friend, to receive Him as your Creator, Lord, and Savior from sin. Private, family, and public worship will be thrilling experiences for you if Jesus is reigning in your heart. Won't you receive Him now?

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. Congregational worship is not taught in the Bible.
 - b. God's special day of worship is the seventh-day Sabbath.
 - c. Worship in spirit and truth means having Jesus living in your heart.
 - d. God accepts any kind of worship as long as it is done sincerely.
2. Discuss: The great controversy between good and evil in our universe began because Lucifer lost his ability to worship God in spirit and in truth. Why did he lose that ability? Why are people today not able to worship God in the right way?