

A Table In the Wilderness

"Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:19).

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Thoughts on Public Worship

"God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

"We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit" (Phil. 3:3).

"In vain they do worship Me" (Matt. 15:9).

"A show of wisdom in will-worship" (Col. 2:23).

"How do we worship?" This question is of great importance today

profession of Christianity, and unite with others to worship God. Public worship has always been a mark of God's servants. From the earliest Biblical times, right through to the present day, God's people have met to worship. However few, and whatever the difficulties, they have met together for many other reasons, besides offering worship to God. For example, gathering for worship gives public testimony to the world; it is an encouragement, comfort and strength to those who join together, and it trains and prepares them for the worship of

But God asks principally for the heart in worship, whether it be in public or private worship. God is a Spirit, and He cares nothing for man's bodily service, no matter how devout it may appear, nor how organized it may be, if it is not accompanied by heart service as well.

because many people attend church inconsistently; and many who attend regularly are not concerned about how worship should be carried out. The Bible teaches that not all worship is right in the sight of God.

So it is important for those who profess to be Christians to understand the essence of worship. In this article we are considering only public worship.

The Importance of Public Worship

There are few who call themselves Christians who would deny that we ought to make some public

eternity.

Right through the Old Testament there are many examples of public worship – from the Patriarchs to the time of Christ. The Jew who was not a public worshipper would have been cut off from the congregation of Israel. In the New Testament, we find that Jesus Christ gave a special promise of His presence whenever two or three are assembled in His name. The Apostles, wherever they founded churches, made the duty of assembling together one of the first principles. It is an undeniable fact that where there is no private

True Worship

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prayer, there is no grace in a man's heart; equally, where there is no public worship there is no Church of God and no profession of Christianity.

It is true that public worship can become a merely formal act, and many do attend and get no benefit. But misuse is no argument against proper use, and people who attend in this frame of mind become, if anything, more hardened. We should never forget the exhortation in the book of Hebrews, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhort one another" (Heb.10:25). We should act upon this exhortation and go on worshipping in spite of every discouragement. Let us say with David, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord"; and "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 122:1; 84:10).

The Principles of Public Worship

1. True Worship must have the right object.

The Bible is adamant that God alone should be the object of worship. Prayers and adoration to anything or anyone else are forbidden by Scripture, a waste of time and most offensive to God. God is a jealous God, and He has declared that He will not give His glory to another (Ex.20:3).

2. True Worship must be through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

This again is fully commanded in Scripture. "No man comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14: 6). Christians are a people who "come to God by Christ" (Heb.7:25). Anyone who presumes to come to Him without atonement and the Mediator whom He has appointed will find his worship unacceptable.

3. True Worship must be wholly Scriptural.

We see from the New Testament that churches have some liberty in the

format for worship. But nothing should be done that is clearly contrary to God's Word written.

4. True Worship must be Intelligent.

Worshippers must know what they are doing. It is completely false to say that ignorance is the mother of devotion. The charge against the Samaritans was, "You worship what you do not know" (John 4:22). God made man an intelligent being with mind as well as body. Worship where the mind is not involved is useless and unprofitable.

5. True Worship Must Be From The Heart.

Our affections as well as our intellect must be used in worship; our inner man must serve God as well as our body. Many times in the Old Testament we read that the lip worship of the Jews was unacceptable to God (Isa.29:13; Ez.33:31). But God asks principally for the heart in worship, whether it be in public or private worship. God is a Spirit, and He cares nothing for man's bodily service, no matter how devout it may appear, nor how organized it may be, if it is not accompanied by heart service as well.

6. True Worship Must Be Reverent.

Our Lord began and ended His ministry with practical protests against irreverent worship. Twice He drove out from the Temple those who were profaning its courts. So called Christians who spend their time in Church staring about, whispering, fidgeting and so on, but not really praying or listening, are no better than those cast out by Christ. Admittedly "bodily service" alone is useless, but there is a proper way to behave when we come near to God. If it is worthwhile to attend worship at all, then it is worthwhile to do it properly, carefully and well. "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb.12:28-29).

These principles show that there are many in our churches who are worshipping in an utterly useless way; in a way that is without Scripture, without Christ, without the Holy Spirit, without knowledge, without heart and without benefit to the worshipper. Anyone trying to worship in this way might just as well not be in the congregation. Every Christian must always be on guard that his worship does not fall short in any way. It is worth remembering that God looks for the quality of worship and not quantity. The inward and spiritual character of the congregation is of far more importance in His sight than the number of worshippers, or the outward signs of devotion which they show.

Many people today are worried about what elements should be involved in worship. This is particularly true of the "outsider" who hears the various denominations claiming that each one's method is the only correct way to worship, and as a result, he is confused. Now it is true that there is little said concerning the nature of public worship in the New Testament, and in this respect there is a wide difference between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. The Jewish religion was full of strict and detailed directions concerning worship; Christianity contains very few directions, and even these are very simple and general. The Jewish religion was full of types, emblems and figures; the Christian religion has only two, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Jewish religion approached the worshipper mainly through the eye, whereas the Christian religion appeals directly to the heart and the conscience. The Jewish religion was confined to one particular nation, but Christianity was meant for the world. The Jew could turn to the writings of Moses and see at a glance every item of his worship; but the Christian can only point to a few isolated texts and passages which are to be applied to every Church according to circumstances. In fact there is nothing in the New Testament which is equivalent to Exodus or Leviticus

in the Old. Nevertheless a careful reader of the Scriptures can hardly fail to pick out the essential parts and principles of Christian worship. So it may be said that where these essentials are present, there is Christian worship; but where they are absent, the worship is defective, imperfect and incomplete.

-J.C. Ryle (Anglican Bishop, 19th Century).

(A fuller treatment of Public Worship by J.C. Ryle is available in booklet form and will be sent upon request.)

What Causes You To Worship God?

What causes you to worship God? We are made in the image of God and designed with an ability to worship God that distinguishes us from the rest of creation. Moreover, each of us is a uniquely designed image.

God created all things for His glory. It is incumbent upon all creation to deeply honor and respect Him in His Majestic Holiness, Righteousness, Justice, Love, Mercy, Grace, Truth, Beauty and all of His Glorious Perfections, "Praise is due to you, O God" (Psalm 65:1).

What causes you to worship God? Have you given time to thinking about this important question? God uses His Word, His Spirit and His Bride to ignite and sustain the flames of worshipping the most Blessed and Holy Triune God. We worship Him in ways similar to how we show our love for Him in ways. Let us focus here on deep awe-filled reverent worship.

My prayer is that this short article will help you identify your "worship buttons". What "presses your worship buttons?" That is, what past experiences brought you to a deep reverent awe of God that caused you to worship? You may have shouted, sang, clapped or even danced with joy but that is not what I am talking about. Those actions may accompany reverent worship but awe-filled

worship emanates from the deepest parts of heart and soul.

Let's start with a look at Gideon as he listens to the Midianites in their camp, "13 *And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed."* 14 *Then his companion answered and said, "This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp."* 15 *And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand"* (Judges 7:13-15).

Did you notice Gideon's response in verse 15? Gideon worshipped. This was not a shallow, casual worship. This was life and soul. Everything, all of Gideon's being was involved. The fruit is shown by a strong faith in God expressed by the confidence Gideon had that the LORD had already given the host of Midian into the hand of Israel.

When was the last time you had a worship moment like this one? When was the last time you knew with absolute surety that God is sovereign over all His works - that whatever God does is perfect, good, just and right? I'm not talking about head-knowledge alone, or by mere mental assent, but by understanding this with your whole being, your mind, soul and spirit. You know this experientially. You respond with deep awe and respect.

It causes a total surrender of everything to this glorious, wonderful Supreme Being. It is not a physical bowing down or kneeling, though that is a good response, but a bowing deeply within your soul.

God knew exactly what it took to cause Gideon to worship. God knew

the weakness of Gideon's faith just as surely as He knows the weakness of your faith or my faith. Some weaknesses are small nooks and crannies of darkness. Others are gaping holes, even chasms of unbelief. Some we are aware of and openly ask God for help. In worse cases, we delude ourselves. We live in self-denial of who we really are. We think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think.

God orchestrated the exact situation that caused Gideon to deeply worship Him. What about you? Does God orchestrate circumstances in your life that cause you to deeply worship Him? If not, you can stop reading this article right now! Your time will be better invested in prayer, asking God to work this miracle in your life.

If you have experienced this deep, profound sense of awe and wonderful worship, what were the circumstances designed by God that brought you into the praise of His Glory? Do you see a pattern of similar circumstances that tend to cause you to worship? This is not a trivial question. You may need to prayerfully reflect upon what God has done. If you are not normally given to prayerful reflection ask for help and pray to remember accurately.

If you find similarities in the circumstances that bring you to worship, consider why God has used these. You will learn something about yourself. This is a good thing because it will enable you to take action, to deliberately place yourself in circumstances that cause you to worship deeply.

If certain passages of scripture tend to propel you into worship it is a good thing to read those regularly since God never receives enough worship. Of course, you also need to study the whole Bible, the whole counsel of God. But don't let your Bible study prevent you from devotional worship! Good theology produces doxology.

It may be that certain hymns trigger that deep sense of wonder and gratefulness. What is it about the hymn? Is it specific phrases or something in the music? If a sunrise or sunset helps you to worship, take the time to view the splendor God has imbued into His creation.

When you identify some circumstances, ask yourself a very important question: Who or what is the object of my worship? If a beautiful sunset has a greater impact on your heart than the life of Christ, be honest and ask God to help you understand why. God is most

easily irk us. We pray and take appropriate actions to eliminate or minimize these “flesh buttons” as we grow in sanctifying grace. This mortifying side of sanctification is vital. However, the fuel that powers transformation is deep worship.

Christ is the foremost focus of deep worship. The pinnacle of God’s glorification is displayed in, through, and by Christ. Loving Christ fills the inward man with renewed strength to mortify sin and serve God. Often, this means doing good to others, especially to the household of God, His family. (Rom.12:13; Heb.13:2).

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glorified in His Only Begotten Son. (John 17:1).

Or it may be that your favorite passages of scripture that bring you into worship do not relate to Christ our Blessed Savior? If this is the case, be honest and ask yourself why.

It is good to love the written Word of God. Yet it is absolutely vital to love the Living Word of God who has revealed the Father to us. Christ ought to be worshipped in union with the Father and Holy Spirit. You must have a personal, worshipful, adoring, loving relationship with Christ or you will die in your sins to be eternally separated from His Blessings forever.

To be clear, we cannot cause ourselves to worship deeply. True worship is not mechanical. There is no guaranteed recipe. But it is okay, even a good practice, to place yourself in situations that cause you to worship.

Given the importance of this, let’s look at this a different way. Have you heard of “pushing someone’s buttons?” We all have situations that

Do you have worship buttons? Do you have situations that propel you into godly worship and behavior? Oh sinning saint! Push your worship buttons today! Why wait? Praise is due. We owe it to Him who fills all things and who is our All in All. “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph.1:22-23).

-Walter Gowen (Walter is a teacher at Christ Bible Church, Dublin, CA).

The Three Stages of Worship



1. Purification

Purification is the process where the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses the worshipper from the defilement of sin that would otherwise hinder the acceptable worship of God.

2. Revelation

Revelation is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in revealing to a worshipper various aspects of the nature and attributes of Christ and the Godhead, including His beauty, glory, majesty, righteousness, holiness, and love, that would have otherwise been hidden had not the veil been lifted by the Holy Spirit.

3. Adoration

The worshipper, having been purified by the blood of Christ, and having the eyes of his understanding enlightened to behold the beauty of the Lord, is thus prepared and equipped to turn his attention fully to adoring, praising, thanking, magnifying, and glorifying, the triune God through Jesus Christ.

-Pastor Joe Jacowitz