

## THOUGHTS ON WORSHIP

### TRUE WORSHIP

John 4:20-26 (NASB95)

<sup>20</sup>“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, “**Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.** <sup>22</sup>“**You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.** <sup>23</sup>“**But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.** <sup>24</sup>“**God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”** <sup>25</sup> The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, “**I who speak to you am He.**”

People had rather argue about religion than face the serious questions of God's claims on our lives. That is as true today as it was 2000 years ago. Where to worship, whether or not to have music, and such things are not the real issues.

The issue is Who is God and what is His nature. Jesus came to reveal God to us. True worship of God involves communing with God on a spirit-to-Spirit basis. To do that we must be born again of the Spirit. This is the new birth and the new life for which Jesus came. The woman knew that the Messiah was to come. What she needed to know was that she was having an encounter with Him. We need to be ever alert to the fact that we can encounter God in every situation in life if we are open to Him.

### COMPONENTS OF WORSHIP

Genesis 21:3-7 (NASB95)

<sup>3</sup> Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. <sup>4</sup> Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup> Sarah said, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.” <sup>7</sup> And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Initially, Abraham and Sarah had some hope of the two of them having a child as the obvious, literal fulfillment of the promise of God. When that didn't happen, they took an alternate approach with Hagar being a surrogate for Sarah. Finally they came to the point of having no confidence in their ability to have a child of their own. It was humanly impossible. When we come to such a point where we do not rely on our own strength, then God will act in our behalf.

It is obvious from the words of Sarah that she considered the birth of Isaac a real miracle. She said, “Who would have said this would happen?” The awe and amazement that she expressed are components of true worship. There is a hymn that states this so well, “I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene; and wonder how He could love me, a sinner, commended, unclean.”

### SOMBER WORSHIP?

<p>Zephaniah 3:14-15 (NASB95)  <sup>14</sup> Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout <i>in triumph</i>, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all <i>your</i> heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!  <sup>15</sup> The LORD has taken away <i>His</i> judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more.</p>	<p>The natural response to finding God's favor and knowing we have been blessed should be to express the joy we feel. Singing and shouting have been a part of praise and worship for thousands of years. We tend to be very "reserved" in our modern sophistication. Can you imagine giving an eight year old boy a new bicycle and his attitude being, "Oh, yeah, I almost forgot -- thanks for helping." What we would really like to see is some evidence of excitement a new bike ought to create in an eight-year old. I believe God is pleased when we are appreciative and excited about the greatest gift one can receive: eternal life.</p>
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### LITERAL MEANING OF WORSHIP

<p>Micah 6:6-8 (NASB95)  <sup>6</sup> With what shall I come to the LORD <i>And</i> bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? <sup>7</sup> Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn <i>for</i> my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? <sup>8</sup> He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?</p>	<p>As Micah spoke for the people, He questioned the sufficiency of formal religious exercises. "Coming before the Lord" was the practice of people (particularly males) going to the Temple annually on major feasts days -- Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Formal worship involved the practice of physically bowing down before God. In fact, the Hebrew word this is translated "worship" literally means to "bow down." Other elements of their formal worship involved animal sacrifices and grain offerings mixed with oil. Most people believed that such practices were all that God wanted of His people. Micah questioned if the Lord would be pleased with these "religious observances."</p>
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### TRANSFORMING WORSHIP

“It is a fundamental truth of Scriptures that we become like whatever or whomever we worship. When Israel worshiped the gods of the nations, she became like the nations- blood thirsty, oppressive, full of deceit and violence (cf. Jer. 7) Romans 1 confirms that principle by showing how idolaters are delivered over to sexual deviations and eventually to social and moral chaos. The same dynamic is at work today. Muslims worship Allah, a power rather than a person, and their policies reflect the commitment. Western humanists worship man, with the result that every degrading whim of the human heart is honored and exalted and disseminated through the organs of mass media.” Peter Leithart – *Foundations* 38 (Spring, 1997): 27

## WORSHIP AS AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

<p>Genesis 12:6-7 (NASB95) <sup>6</sup> Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite <i>was</i> then in the land. <sup>7</sup> The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.</p>	<p>Abraham did not just stop at the border. He was not satisfied to be barely in. The place that he came to (Shechem) means "shoulder." This is connected to the idea of consent or obedience. The territory was Moreh which means "teacher" implying knowledge and/or understanding. There is a very significant teaching here: "Consenting (obedience) leads to understanding." Most of us want it the other way around, but, Jesus said "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know." (John 7:17) All <u>knowledge</u> is the result of obedience -- everything else is just <u>information</u>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">God affirmed Abram in his obedience: He appeared to Abram and gave him the assurance "unto thy seed will I give this land."</p> <p>Abraham response was right and proper: he worshiped God. Notice that he built an altar unto the Lord. He sacrificed a burnt offering unto God. His is the first recording of a formal sacrifice made by Abraham, although his leaving Ur and Haran were notable sacrifices. The burnt offering had significance in that it represented <u>total commitment to God</u>. This is what God wants from each of us: total surrender to Him. <u>We can do it only when we have a personal encounter with God</u>. True worship, sacrifice, surrender follow naturally with encounter. In speaking of salvation, the question is often asked, "Have you had a personal encounter with Jesus?" Those are not just idle words!</p>
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## WORSHIP AS WASTE

<p>Matthew 26:6-13 (NASB95) <sup>6</sup> Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, <sup>7</sup> a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined <i>at the table</i>. <sup>8</sup> But the disciples were indignant when they saw <i>this</i>, and said, "Why this waste? <sup>9</sup> "For this <i>perfume</i> might have been sold for a high price and <i>the money</i> given to the poor." <sup>10</sup> But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. <sup>11</sup> "For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me. <sup>12</sup> "For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. <sup>13</sup> "Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."</p>	<p>Practical, logical, human reasoning would conclude that anything we do as worship or sacrifice is a waste. The Old Testament sacrifices could be called a waste of perfectly good meat and grain. Elaborate church buildings and even the time we set aside for worship might be spent in things deemed "more practical." Indeed, many have concluded this in the conduct of their lives. They can find something "better" to do with their money, time, and talent. Only that which is for no other purpose but to honor God is suitable for worship. We may not understand the benefit of what is done, however, the Lord sees beyond the obvious and knows the spiritual significance of the sacrifices we make and the worship we offer. This should not imply that we neglect helping the poor and needy. Both actions are appropriate.</p>
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