



WORSHIP

Personal & Public

Revised Edition



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Worship

Personal and Public

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Essential Worship

Contents

Introduction

Rain Gauge Types of Worship	9
Essentials of Personal Worship	33
Essentials of Public Worship	55
The Pre-Mosaic Pattern for Public Worship	74
The Way of Cain	87
Strange Fire	99
Praise	120
The Lost Sense of Reverence	127
Questions Answered	130

Summary

Essential Worship

Introduction

What is true worship? Is true worshiping a matter of personal opinion, feelings, looks and sounds? Is it a matter of emotional hype or even genuine excitement?

Churches are more than ever attempting to provide a product that will draw customers, and increase numbers. They advertise worship that enriches your experience and makes you feel good. They design their “*worship*” services to attract unchurched people.

However, the church and its services are not designed by God to evangelize the world, but for the instruction and worship of its baptized believing membership (Mt. 28:20). The church is to “*go*” into the world for evangelism. When the world is brought into the church, and worship is designed for the world, the church corrupts and goes into apostasy.

This unbiblical change of emphasis by many churches explains why their membership has so little spiritual growth, gross lack of Biblical understanding, full of divisions and false doctrines.

Moreover, the Biblical pattern of worship is not designed to pursue customer satisfaction at all, but rather is designed to please God regardless if it pleases man or not.

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. – Psa. 29:2

Does all worship give glory “*due unto his name*”? Is all worship performed “*in the beauty of holiness*”? We think not. For example, many suppose that heartfelt sincere praise is the essence of true worship regardless of what a person actually believes or practices.

Essential Worship

However, there are two men in the Old Testament who learned that acceptable worship consisted of more than mere sincere praise or more than the correct form of worship. One of these men is said to be a man “*after God’s own heart.*” There was no lack of sincerity on the part of this man. However, David learned by experience that sincere heartfelt praise accompanied with all sorts of praise music does not necessarily constitute acceptable worship. Here is a description of his heartfelt sincere worship:

And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets. – 1 Chron. 13:8

Note the words “*with all their might.*” There was no lack of heartfelt sincerity. There was no lack of praise songs and instruments of praise.

However, God was so displeased with their worship that he killed one of these sincere participants. David learned there is more to public worship than mere sincerity and praise music:

For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. – 1 Chron. 15:13

Notice that David did not blame the person God killed. He said “*ye*” and “*us*” and “*we*” sought him not “*after the due order.*” David learned there is a “*due order*” in approaching God for public worship:

For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. So the priests and the Levites sanctified

Essential Worship

themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD. – 1 Chron. 15:13-15

David learned that sincerity and praise are not substitutes for obedience to God’s Word when it comes to public worship. God does not accept sincere praise at the expense of obedience to His Word.

The other Old Testament example is King Saul. Saul thought due order would be accepted from a disobedient heart.

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. – 1 Sam. 15:22

In contrast to David, Saul offered unto God what the Bible required as “*due order*.” However, his heart was not right and his life was not right with God. He had disobeyed God and thought that God would accept his worship simply because it was externally correct. However, the wise man says:

The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind? – Prov. 21:27

David and Saul learned that true praise must be grounded “*in spirit*” as well as “*in truth*.” David offered worship “*in spirit*” or with a sincere heart, but not according external “*due order*” or “*in truth*.” Saul offered worship that conformed to external “*due order*” but was lacking “*in spirit*” as it originated from a disobedient heart lacking sincerity. However, acceptable worship

Essential Worship

requires both. Jesus echoed this in John 4:24 where he said that true worship “*must*” not only be “*in spirit*” but also “*in truth*.”

The essence of true worship is ultimately the product of God. Without God no one can worship “*in spirit*.” Apart from God’s revealed “*pattern*” for worship, no one can worship God “*in truth*.” This combination produces true worship in “*the beauty of holiness*” and acceptable to God.

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. – Psa. 29:2

God does not accept any kind of worship that is given any way you like. God makes a distinction between “*acceptable*” and unacceptable worship:

To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. – Jer. 6:20

Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. – Eph. 5:10

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. – 1 Pet. 2:5

Don’t confuse what glorifies or pleases God with God getting glory by ruling and overruling what displeases Him. God will ultimately be glorified by all things he allows (Rom. 8:28). However, we are to give him glory by our attitude, words and actions.

Essential Worship

Jesus makes it very clear that the world hates and despises what pleases God, and God hates what pleases the world.

*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore **the world hateth you**. – Jn. 15:19*

*I have given them thy word; and the **world hath hated them**, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. – Jn. 17:14*

What many regard today as “true worship” or “authentic” or “spiritual” worship is really polluted worship that God despises and rejects.

True worship “*in spirit and in truth*” whether personal or public is always characterized by two great truths in the Bible: (1) The true God; (2) True salvation. True public worship is characterized by the divine “*pattern*” for public worship which gives proper expression to both of those truths.

In the following pages the order of topics will be; (1) Rain Gauge Types of Worship; (2) Essentials of Personal Worship; (3) Essentials of Public worship; (4) The Pre-Mosaic Pattern of Public Worship; (5) The Way of Cain; (6) Strange fire; (7) Praise; (8) Questions Answered; and closed by a summary. The essential building blocks for worship will be carefully examined and distinguished from false worship.

Mark W. Fenison
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Essential Worship

CHAPTER ONE

Rain Gauge Types of Worship

A man once married a farmer's daughter and their first anniversary was nearly upon them. He thought to himself, what would be the ideal anniversary gift for his wife? Considering her farming background, he came upon the ideal gift. He bought her a "water gauge." He envisioned her delight in measuring the water precipitation in the back yard and congratulated himself upon such a wise choice.

Finally the day arrived and he eagerly anticipated the imagined delight of his wife as she opened his gift. She opened and looked at the gift with utter amazement and said, "*A rain gauge! You bought me a rain gauge?*" His wife was not impressed, and now it has been a family joke for several years. However, it serves well to illustrate, what may delight the giver does not always delight the receiver. We are commanded to "give" the kind of worship that God delights in;

*Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name;
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.* – Psa. 29:2

The very term "*worship*" means *to give worth or give honor*. True worship is that which gives honor to God rather than dishonor, "*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*"

All the Hebrew and Greek terms translated "*worship*" are descriptive actions of the body. Unfortunately, many fail to see that these descriptive actions (bowing, prostrating the body, folding hands, lifting hands, vocalizing words of praise) are designed to convey the character of the spirit/attitude within that body which

Essential Worship

cause the body to respond in that manner. The body is simply the vehicle for soul expression.

Therefore, simply going through the bodily motions that might indicate to men true soul worship is not really worship unless the body is reflecting the true state of the heart:

***The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.** - Psa. 51:17*

*For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is **poor and of a contrite spirit**, and **trembleth at my word**. – Isa. 66:2*

*They are not humbled even unto this day, **neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes**, that I set before you and before your fathers. – Jer. 44:10*

The only worship that gives glory to God is worship that expresses soul submission to the revealed will of God. Any other kind of worship is simply “rain gauge” worship.

The Scriptures identify and define specific types of “rain gauge” worship that does not honor God, but rather displeases Him greatly.

1. Will Worship
2. Idolatrous Worship
3. Vain Worship
4. Disorderly Worship
5. Ignorant Worship

Essential Worship

All five types of worship listed above dishonor God, and are regarded as sin by God rather than true worship, no matter how sincere the worshipper may be.

A. Will Worship

.....after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. – Col. 2:22-23

1. The Essence of Will Worship:

Have you ever heard someone say, “I know the Bible teaches that, but **I think** this....., **I believe that**.....”? Will worship is the elevation of the human will over the will of God as final authority for faith and practice.

There are only two types of people on planet earth regardless of how they classify themselves. There are those who elevate and honor their own will above the revealed will of God and say “**I think**.....**I believe**.....**I will**” and there are those who say with Jesus:

....nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done. – Lk. 22:42

I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me. – Jn. 5:30

That is the essential difference between carnality and spirituality. Listen to how people talk and you can know their final authority

Essential Worship

for their belief and practice. If the emphasis is “*I think/believe*” rather than “*It is written*”, than that is a clear indicator of will worship.

2. The Expression of Will Worship

What is “*will worship*”? Will worship is the exaltation and giving preeminence of the will of the creature over the will of the Creator. It is expressed verbally by opposition to God’s revealed will. Paul describes it as religious worship “*after the commandments and doctrines of men.*” It is expressed doctrinally by exalting and honoring traditions or the wisdom of man, and “*falsely so called science*” over the revealed Word of God.

In the context, Paul revealed the will of God in the matter of the Old Covenant system of worship (Col. 2:14-16). The Old Covenant system of worship had been abolished and replaced by the New Covenant system of worship. However, there were many in Paul’s day and in our day who assert their own will in this matter over the revealed will of God. They attempt to continue Old Covenant aspects under New Covenant worship. Many professed Christian denominations (SDA, Messianic Jews; Catholic, etc.) embrace the same error today.

Ultimately, it comes down to who is final authority for faith and practice. Will worship is the will of man replacing or usurping the will of God as final authority.

2. The Entrance of Will Worship

This issue began in the Garden of Eden with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. From the Garden of Eden the issue

Essential Worship

has always been, and still is, whose will is recognized as final authority? God asserted His will as final authority in determining the knowledge of “good” versus “evil” in the Garden of Eden. He said it was good for man to eat of all herbs in the garden. He said it was “evil” to partake of this one tree. In making this distinction, God claimed to be the final law giver in determining right from wrong. Thus, the one tree that was asserted by God to be wrong to eat was called the tree “*of the knowledge of good and evil*,” as it served to test man’s submission to the revealed will of God.

Satan correctly told Eve that they would be “*as gods*” if they partook of the tree. By partaking of what God denied them, they usurped the right of God as final lawgiver over them, and asserted equality with God to determine good and evil for themselves. Will worship declares “*I am the captain of my own ship and ruler of my own destiny, and I will do as I please*”

However, are you really capable of being the captain of your own ship and the ruler of your own destiny?? Do you have that power or right? Did you create yourself and can you really over rule over circumstances in order to make them conform to your own will?

Violation of God’s revealed will is called “sin” in the Bible (1 Jn. 3:6). Sin is exalting your will not merely over God, but over all around you. The consequences of self-preeminence are divorce, murder, prisons, wars, and all other conflicts between individual’s and nations.

Many today are doing exactly what Adam and Eve did in the Garden. They are exalting and honoring their own will above the revealed will of God. They are denying the moral absolutes of Scripture and replacing them with relative absolutes of their own choosing. They have usurped God’s revealed will as final

Essential Worship

authority over their life and exalted the human will above God and thus “will worship”.

3. Examples of Will Worship

For example, there are those who claim they can “*worship God at home or on a mountain top just as good as in church.*” However, is that the revealed will of God or the exaltation of the human will over God?

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. – Heb. 10:25

Certainly one can worship God at home or on the mountain top or wherever they may find themselves, but that cannot replace church worship. The scriptures clearly teach us how to view those who pit their will against God’s will:

*To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because **there is no light in them.*** – Isa. 8:20

One of the most atrocious errors that have crept into professing Christianity is elevating uninspired “sacred tradition” and/or supernatural experiences above the scriptures, as final authority for determining truth from error. No longer is the Word of God the primary standard within professed Christendom to try traditions and experiences, but traditions and experiences are now the accepted standard to interpret the Word of God. This is the predominating error found in Catholicism, Mormonism, Pentecostalism and Watchtowerism.

Essential Worship

Will worship is at the root of all the following “rain gauge” types of worship.

B. Idolatrous Worship

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; - Ex. 20:4-5

Nothing is more prevalent than idolatrous worship in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as today. Moreover, nothing is more misunderstood and distorted than idolatrous worship.

1. Idolatry is first an Internal State of mind

Most believe that idolatrous worship is merely making and bowing down to an external object. It is certainly that, but much more. The Biblical understanding of idolatry goes much deeper and broader than mere visible external actions. Those who manufactured the idols realized they were making them with their own hands. The idols were merely visible expressions of invisible and internal ideas or conceptions of deities found within the head of the idol makers and worshippers. Paul says they are results of “*vain...imagination*s.”

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their

Essential Worship

imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. – Rom. 1:21-23

The idol only gives visible expression to “*vain...imaginations*” or the mental concept of a god already conceived in the mind. The idol merely represents what they conceive in their own minds as god.

For example, Israel knew that the two golden calves made right before their eyes in the wilderness were not the *literal* gods who brought upon Egypt the ten plagues or opened the Red Sea and performed miracles in their midst. They saw the fire by night and the cloud by day long before they saw these idols being made right before their own eyes. They simply accepted these calves as visible expressions of that God or visible mediums to worship that God. This is precisely what the second and third commandments expressly prohibited, because no visible form of God can provide an accurate visible expression of the image of the invisible image of God (Col. 1:15). Any visible expression will always distort God, as it will always come short in providing full representation of His attributes.

Indeed, the attempt to make a *visible* expression of God is the essence of idolatry:

*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image **made like** to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. – Rom. 1:22-23*

Essential Worship

The gods conceived by Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Mormonism, United Pentecostalism and New Age Christianity are all idolatrous gods. Why? All of these mental concepts of God contradict the nature of God revealed in scriptures.

For example, Paul writing to the Corinthians speaks of “*another Jesus*” and “*another Spirit*” (2 Cor. 11:4). Paul did not actually believe “*another*” of any of these actually existed except as distorted concepts (doctrines) in the minds of heretics. It was their false mental perceptions that originated “*another*” Jesus, Spirit, and gospel. It was man’s distorted perception of God that moved him to make visible representations of God in the form of men and beasts (Rom. 1:19-22). Paul believed these distorted mental perceptions or doctrines originated with demons (1 Tim. 4:10) and those who participated in idolatrous worship were fellowshiping with demons (1 Cor. 10:19-21).

True Biblical salvation involves the revelation of the true Biblical God (Jn. 17:3), as revealed in the Scriptures. It is the spirit of the “antichrist” which perverts the doctrine of God (1 Jn. 4:2-5; 2 Jn. 9-11).

2. Idolatry is worship through visible forms

Another misunderstanding about idolatry is that Exodus 20:4-5 does not condemn making visible forms, as a means, or medium to represent and worship the true God. For example, some would cite the making of the brazen serpent by Moses in order to support their own practice for using visible images in worship of God.

However, this idea is wrong for several reasons. First, God never commanded the brazen serpent to be made for a visible medium to worship God. He never said it should be used as a

Essential Worship

visible medium through which prayer or worship should be directed toward God. Instead, it was designed to test man's allegiance to God's revealed will. God had said that all who merely looked upon it would be healed of their serpent bites. If they believed God's Word, they would look and God would heal them. However, if they did not believe God's Word, they refused to look. Hence, it was a visible object designed to manifest their faith in the Word of God. It was designed, along with many other ceremonial forms to serve as a type of Christ (Jn. 3:14-15). Second, the command was to "look" at it, not to pray or worship God through it. It was provided to test their faith in God's Word or command. However, it was later destroyed in order to keep people from making it a visible object of adoration and/or a means to worship God.

*He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it *Nehushtan*. – 2 Kings 18:4*

In other words, it was destroyed when the ancient Israelites began to treat it exactly as the Roman Catholic Church treats their visible images. Those who direct their prayers or adoration toward God through visible images or other beings are guilty of replacing Jesus Christ as the only mediator between God and man. We are commanded to pray individually and directly unto the Father under the leadership of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ:

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. – Eph. 2:18

Third, the New Covenant provides no command to make any kind of visible image for use in worship of God.

Essential Worship

3. Idolatry is anything that replaces God as preeminent

Anything that takes preeminence over God in your life is an idol. An idol can be your car or your spouse. It is anything that replaces His position or becomes the supreme object of devotion in your life. An idol is anything in your mind that you recognize as God, but is contrary to God as revealed in Scripture.

C. Vain Worship

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. – Mt. 15:7-9

The word “*vain*” means a “fruitless” or “useless” thing or exercise. In context, the spiritual leadership of Israel was claiming to serve and worship God according to God’s Word, but their *final* source of authority for proper service and worship was contradictory to God’s Word.

During the period between Malachi and the arrival of John the Baptist famous scribes had provided oral traditions that were designed to provide interpretations of the scriptures. These oral traditions were later written down in a book called “The Mishnah.” The intent of these traditional oral interpretations was to prevent violation of God’s Word. These oral traditions became the final authority for faith and practice in the place of the scriptures. These traditions are what Christ refers to in the Sermon on the Mount when he says, “*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time*” (Mt. 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43).

Essential Worship

The scriptures alone are inspired of God. No human traditions, regardless of how revered may be their source can ever be placed on an equal level with scriptures and/or replace the Holy Spirit as the final authority for interpreting scripture.

1. Vain Worship adds to and replaces God’s Word with “Sacred Tradition” as final authority for faith and practice

This is the essence of Roman Catholic worship, as they clearly claim that the papal decrees, church counsels and so called “Sacred Tradition” are the authorized means to interpret God’s Word, when in fact, such human sources contradict the teachings of God’s Word. For example, where in God’s Word can we find a “pope” or “cardinals” or “archbishops” or a host of many other things Roman Catholicism teaches and requires?

This is equally the essence of the Watch Tower Society that replaces the Word of God with its body of ruling elders as the mouth piece of God and/or its books as essential to interpreting God’s Word. The same can be said for the Seventh Day Adventists and the writings of Ellen G. White.

Indeed, every denomination whose prophet(s) has failed the Biblical tests of a prophet (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Mt. 7:14-20; 1 Cor. 14:37-38; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; etc.), but whose prophecies are regarded as necessary to properly interpret scriptures, or are added to, or treated as God’s Word in their worship is vain worship (Mormons, SDA, Catholics, etc.).

Essential Worship

2. Vain worship is Hypocritical Worship

However, vain worship is more than mere replacement of God's Word as final authority. It is also the contradiction between what you claim and what you practice. The spiritual leadership of Israel claimed they were serving and worshipping God with their mouth, but in fact were violating God's will with their practice. Vain worship is hypocritical worship.

***Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.** – Mt. 15:7-9*

For example, when the words of your mouth do not match the condition of your heart and/or the doctrine embraced in your heart does not match the teachings of Scripture that is hypocrisy and vain worship. Either way, the consequence is the same in God's sight – hypocritical vain worship.

3. The Natural Man is a religious Hypocrite

Anthropology proves that man is religious by nature. Every culture and every generation provides evidence for this conclusion.

However, all worship by the natural man is hypocritical, and therefore, vain by its very nature. Jesus repeatedly told his followers that a bad tree (heart) cannot bring forth good fruit (good works), in spite of the profession, or recognition by men that what they are doing is the "good" works of God.

Essential Worship

*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, **neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.** – Mt. 7:17-18*

*Either make¹ the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, **how can ye, being evil, speak good things?** for out of the abundance **of the heart** the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure **of the heart** bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. – Mt. 12:33-35*

The heart is evil because its motives are evil. Therefore, no matter how good the “*fruits*” (expressed thoughts in words and actions) may appear to men, God looks upon the heart motive behind those words and actions.

*But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, **but the LORD looketh on the heart.** – 1 Sam. 16:7*

*I the LORD **search the heart,** I try **the reins,** even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. – Jer. 17:10*

¹ He is not asserting that fallen man can “make” his own heart good. He is calling upon his listeners to admit that either the heart is good or bad, but cannot be both. Thus, either “make” it a good or an evil heart because there is no middle ground.

Essential Worship

The essence of sin is thinking, saying and doing things from the wrong motive. Hence, an evil heart is a heart with the wrong motive, and therefore all that springs from that heart is evil in God's sight:

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

- Mt. 15:19

In direct contrast, a "good" heart is a heart that operates from the right motive. What is the right motive? The right motive is "*the glory of God*" for whatsoever you think, say and do:

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. – 1 Cor. 10:31

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; - Col. 3:23

This is why God must first give sinners a "*new heart*" (by the new birth) before they can think, say or do good in God's sight:

*O that there were such an heart in them, **that they would fear me, and keep** all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!*

– Deut. 5:29

*Yet **the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.*** – Deut. 29:4

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will

Essential Worship

put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. – Ezek. 36:26-27

The new birth is the creative work of God whereby God brings our spirit into spiritual union with God. That action is called the new birth. That action is a creative act by God so that our spirit is “*created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) which changes the governing inclination of our heart, providing the right motive to glorify God in all that we think, say and do. However, even with the right heart motive to think, say, and do good, without the indwelling power of the Spirit that heart motive is powerless to perform good (Rom. 7:15-25).

Only when words and actions originate from a good heart empowered by the Spirit, is true worship being expressed. In all other cases it is “vain” worship, because it is hypocritical worship.

4. Hypocrisy between right words but unbiblical definitions

There is another form of hypocritical or vain worship. Vain worship also occurs when the use of right Biblical words and right Biblical forms are defined by false doctrine.

For example, many religions use the same Biblical terms and administer the same Biblical ordinances, but explain them with different meanings and definitions other than what God’s Word gives them. This is well illustrated in the historic ETC [Evangelicals Together with Catholics] compromise between evangelicals and Catholics. Their agreement was based upon mutual Biblical language but with radically different theological interpretations of that language. Hence, the language was Biblical, but the interpretation was unbiblical.

Essential Worship

There are many denominations that conduct worship service using the same Biblical terms, along with the same appearance of Biblical ordinances, but with radical unbiblical understanding and interpretations of those things. Hence, the words and actions are inconsistent with the doctrine that defines them = hypocritical or vain worship.

The truth of the gospel must undergird any expression of true worship or else it is rejected by God as true worship. The truth of the gospel is expressed in Paul's doctrine of justification by faith which consists wholly of the substitutionary Person and works of Jesus Christ in behalf of the sinner. In essence, "*the truth*" of the gospel is that Jesus Christ in His own body completely satisfied all the righteous demands of God's Law against the elect for their complete justification, leaving nothing at all for the elect to complete or add to His finished work. Hence, final judgment with regard to the "works" of the elect has nothing to do with determining heaven or hell, but determining rewards in heaven, as they will be "*rewarded according to*" their works in an already glorified body that stands before Christ. Glorification precedes the Day of Judgment for the elect. Hence, heaven is obtained at the moment of faith (Jn. 5:24), and confirmed at the resurrection in a glorified body prior to the Day of Judgment. Therefore, the elect stand in a sinless perfect condition when their works are being judged for rewards in heaven.

What Paul condemns as "*another gospel*" is any gospel that denies the completed sufficiency of Christ's works and death performed in his own physical body for the full justification of God's elect, or to say it in a positive manner, it is any gospel that includes anything performed in, or through the body of the sinner, by any means, as essential to complete ultimate justification before God.

Essential Worship

The doctrinal error that produces “*another gospel*” is the doctrine that includes progressive sanctification by the Spirit of God through divine means as part of ultimate justification before God. This doctrine *demand*s that Holy Spirit produced obedience by the elect is part and parcel for final justification. The oldest form of this false gospel is that of sacramentalism. Sacramentalism is the doctrine that *demand*s that saving grace is progressively imparted through obedience to divine ordinances and other “good” works demanded by God. Of course, the human will in cooperation with the Holy Spirit is attributed to be the cause for this obedience. Paul repudiated this doctrine in Romans 4:9-11. Paul set forth Abraham as the model of justification by faith and declared that Abraham was justified by faith not merely “*without works*” (Rom. 4:5-6), but that he was already justified “*in uncircumcision*” rather than a progressive act of justification that continued “*in circumcision.*” Furthermore, that justifying faith was a gift of God’s grace (Rom. 4:16; 11:6; Eph. 2:10). Paul thereby repudiated any doctrine of justification that involved personal obedience to divine ordinances.

All who include their own works in their definition of “justification by faith” are involved in Christianized pagan worship (Catholicism, Seventh Day Adventism, Mormonism, Pentecostalism, Methodism, Lutheranism, etc.) whether it is personal or public worship. The truth of the gospel must be the basis for any acceptable act of worship (personal or public) or it is regarded as “vain worship” before God.

Reformed Calvinism requires “perseverance in faithfulness” in addition to perseverance in “*faith*” in order to be finally justified. This doctrine is also a denial of “*the truth*” of the gospel. Perseverance in faithfulness is certainly an evidence of salvation, and token of assurance of salvation before men, but it is not a *necessary* evidence for ultimate justification as proven in the case

Essential Worship

of Lot, and in the principle set forth by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

All worship that is based upon any form of sanctification confused with justification is “*vain worship*” as such an unholy marriage is a repudiation of the substitutionary sufficiency of the Person and works of Christ in his own physical body in behalf of the elect.

D. Disorderly Worship

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.....Let all things be done decently and in order. – 1 Cor. 14:33, 40

Paul is rebuking and correcting both the spirit and form of worship in the church at Corinth. Their public worship service had more in common with their past demonic heathen form of worship (1 Cor. 12:2) than it did with true Biblical worship. God was not the author of such confusion, and thus, what occurred, and what Paul was correcting, was the product of demonic leadership, confused and indecent worship (1 Cor. 12:2). God did not accept this disorderly worship but attributed it to its true source - demons.

Paul provides clear and easy Biblical principles for how true worship in God’s congregations ought to be conducted so that it is done “*decently and in order*” and without “*confusion*” (1 Cor. 14:40).

Essential Worship

1. Confusion is a sign of disorderly worship

The term “*confusion*” necessarily implies disorder, and confusion characterizes actions or speaking where there is inability to understand or comprehend what is being said or done.

The primary root of this confusion and disorder was their vocalizations in the assembly. They were speaking in such a manner that others could not understand what they were saying (1 Cor. 14:2-29). Not only were the members of the congregation confused, but so were the visitors (1 Cor. 14:23).

When those who claim to be “*prophets*” are speaking contradictory to each other in the public worship service then confusion is the result. When people claiming to be speaking or acting under the power of the Holy Spirit lose control of their speech or bodily actions then indecency and impropriety are the result (1 Cor. 14:32-33).

Yet, in spite of this clear Biblical rebuke of such practices (confusion, lack of order, lack of control, indecencies) in the worship service, such practices characterize the Charismatic worship services today.² Paul denies that it is God who is leading in such worship, as God is not the “*author*” of such confusion.

2. Reversing Biblical Roles are a sign of disorderly worship

Also, the scriptures provide scriptural “*order*” in regard to worship (1 Cor. 14:26-36).

² For a more complete analysis of the Charismatic form of worship go to: http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/Counterfeit_Revival_book.pdf

Essential Worship

God established an order of authority in the home where the husband is the head over the wife (Ephes. 5:23-25) and the parents are over the children (Eph. 6:1-3). Yet there are churches that violate that divine order and even reverse it in their worship assemblies (1 Cor. 14:34-36) where women are put in positions of authority over the men (1 Tim. 2:11) and even hold the office of Pastor (1 Tim. 3:1, 4-5) making God the “*author of confusion*” by establishing in the church exactly what he condemns in the home as well as in the church.

There are no greater schisms and confusion found within Christendom than is found within charismatic denominations, and the irony is that they, above all other denominations, claim to be more “spiritual” than others. Corinth had all the spiritual gifts and yet Paul said he could not speak unto them as “spiritual” but rather as “carnal” or “fleshly” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Disorder, confusion and disobedience to God’s Word are the clear advertisement that the “*author*” of such worship is due to demonic power and leadership.

E. Ignorant Worship

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. – Jn. 4:22

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. – Acts 17:22-23

Essential Worship

At the time Jesus said these words, the scriptures were very clear that the only temple that God approved and built was found in Jerusalem. The only priesthood and ordinances God approved were administered in that temple in Jerusalem.

However, the Samaritans had built their own temple, and had their own priesthood, and their own version of the scriptures. This “alternative form of worship” had been established by Jeroboam in 2 Chronicles 12. However, God regarded such alternative worship as a “*high place*” or an unauthorized place of public worship. Many such “*high places*” could be found after the time of Solomon where they worshipped only Jehovah, but in complete disobedience to God’s revealed will which demanded that such public worship was restricted to His approved house in Jerusalem.

Jesus declared to the Samaritan woman “*ye worship ye know not what.*” He did not question their sincerity, but the knowledge upon which their form of worship was based. Their *public* form of worship was not recognized or received by God.

Athens had all kinds of temples including one ascribed to the “*unknown*” god to make sure they did not offend any deity. Paul said “*ye ignorantly worship.*” Paul did not question their sincerity, but the knowledge upon which their worship was based. Their worship was not recognized or received by God.

Many today believe, as long as they worship God sincerely from the heart, that God will accept their worship. Jesus makes it clear to the Samaritan woman that God will not accept mere sincerity void of truth. Acceptable worship “*must*” not only be performed in sincerity (“*in spirit*”) but “*in truth.*”

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in

Essential Worship

truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. – Jn. 4:23-24

Sincere, but ignorant worship is sin, just as worship that conforms outwardly to truth without sincerity is sin.

Therefore, it does matter what you believe and practice. It does matter how you're baptized and who baptizes you! It does matter how you observe the Lord's Supper and who administers it and with whom you observe it! It does matter what you believe about God, His church, salvation, etc. Your attitude does matter.

Many today are like Pilate, confused and genuinely ask "*what is truth?*" The answer is simple. Truth is everything that harmonizes with the nature/attributes of God and His will, as it is revealed in the Bible. For example, Jesus said "*I am the truth*" (Jn. 14:6) and "*thy word is truth*" (Jn. 17:17). Therefore, truth is defined by his person and by his word. The New Testament church is defined by its faithfulness to His person and His word, and is therefore called, "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Tim. 3:15). One of the qualifications for leadership in such a church are only those "*sound in doctrine*" (1 Tim. 3:1-14; Tit. 1:5-13) or those who teach what is consistent with his person and his word.

There is acceptable worship, and there is unacceptable worship and the difference is "*in spirit and in truth*" versus outside that spirit and/or outside His truth. Neither the Holy Spirit nor the Word of God receives disobedience as "acceptable" worship! Disobedience to God's word is defined as, "sin" not worship.

So, does it matter what you believe and practice? Yes! Sincerity is not enough to be received as worship by God. David and all Israel were sincere in 1 Chronicles 13:8, but God rejected their

Essential Worship

worship because it was not “*according to due order*” as set forth in the Word of God (1 Chron. 15:13-15).

Many saved persons are involved in perverted forms of public worship.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. – Rev. 18:4

Their public worship is rejected by God because their worship is in disobedience to His Word.

Conclusion

Therefore, true worship must be carefully distinguished from these condemned forms of worship. Public institutions of worship (churches, para-church organizations) that are characterized by any of these perverted forms of worship are to be avoided by true children of God.

In the following pages, the true characteristics of personal and public worship will be spelled out plainly.

Essential Worship

CHAPTER TWO Essentials of Personal Worship

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. – Psa. 29:2

In this chapter we deal with the essentials of **personal** worship. In the next chapter we will deal with the essentials of **public** worship.

However, David describes the essence of all true worship in Psalm 29:2. The English term “worship” literally means “to give worth” or to render what is deserved, or as David says – “*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*” or what will honor and glorify him. **Not everything offered as worship honors or glorifies him**, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

David says we are to “*worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*” What does that mean? The word “*holiness*” means *to set apart*. The scriptures *set apart* or specify what pleases God and what glorifies God, as true worship (Jn. 17:17).

The beauty that sets apart true worship from all unacceptable worship is described by Jesus as, “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him IN spirit and IN truth*” (Jn. 4:24). To worship the Lord “*IN the beauty of holiness*” is to worship the Lord “*IN spirit and IN truth.*” This is the sphere of acceptable worship. The word “*must*” demands this is the only acceptable sphere of true worship.

Essential Worship

I. Personal Worship must be “in” spirit

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit... - Jn. 4:24

“*God is spirit*” identifies his substance and sphere of existence. His substance is “spirit” rather than material.³ Paul describes the “*image*” of God, as an “*invisible*” image (Col. 1:17). Although, man shares with animals a materialistic nature, only man shares with God a common spiritual or immaterial nature. Therefore, His nature is not materialistic, as Mormons teach.⁴

However, to worship him “*in spirit*” refers more than to His immaterial essence. It also refers to the capacity, capability, and character which define the sphere of worship. For example, to worship “*in spirit*” may be contrasted with worship or operating “*in the flesh*” or carnal activity, such as, those types of rain gauge worship discussed in the previous chapter. The capacity for worship “*in spirit*” is also inclusive of spiritual union with the Holy Spirit or “*in the Spirit.*”

Not all creatures have capacity to worship God. Unlike animals, man was created with a capacity for worship. This capacity for worship is within the capacity, capability, and character of the “*spirit*” (1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12) as the sphere of true worship. Thus, true worship is characterized, as spiritual in nature.

³ Jesus contrasted “*spirit*” with the material substance of man (Lk. 24:39). The fact that he is omnipresent defies the idea his form is material in form or substance like man (Psa. 139). God also speaks of His “soul” in the terms of will, affections and mind.

⁴ Making God in the form of a man is idolatry, and therefore, the conception of God in such a material human form is idolatry – Rom. 1:23

Essential Worship

In substance, both the human “*soul*” and “*spirit*” are immaterial, or of spirit essence, but that does not mean every “spirit” of man has the capacity, capability or character to worship “*in spirit*.”

However, it is the “*spirit*” of man wherein the capacity to fellowship with and worship God occurs. The physical body provides the capacity for fellowship with the *outer* physical world. The soul provides personal *inner* world self-consciousness or awareness (thinking, feeling, and willing), but it is the spirit of man that provides *other* world consciousness or capacity to fellowship with the spirit world. This is true of both the lost and saved man. The lost man has the spirit of Satan working in him (Eph. 2:2-3), and that is why his spirit is “*dead*” (Eph. 2:1 separated from God – Eph. 4:18) and must be “*quickened*” or brought back into spiritual union with God. It is not the body of man that is born of the Spirit, but the spirit of man (Jn. 3:6). What is born of God is created in “*righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) and this new “*inward man*” (Rom. 7:22) delights in the law of God. This is the cleansed internal sanctuary within man for the indwelling Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14, 16) which cannot sin (1 Jn. 3:9).

Worship must be conducted “*in*” spirit, but a spirit that is compatible and in union with the Spirit of God. Therefore to worship God “*in spirit*” requires four things:

A. Spiritual Capacity

The natural or lost man possesses a “*spirit*”, but his spirit is separated from the Spirit of God and in spiritual union with Satan (Eph. 2:2-3). Thus to be spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1) does not mean that the spirit is nonexistent or non-functional, but merely existing and functioning in a condition that is not compatible with the Spirit of God because it is separated from the Spirit of God. God is life,

Essential Worship

God is light and God is holy. Thus to be spiritually separated from God is to be spiritually dead, in spiritual darkness and without holiness. Instead, the spirit that is not united to God is in spiritual union with Satan, who is the “*strong man*” that dominates the human spirit. To be spiritually dead means there is no union, and thus no fellowship between the human spirit and the Spirit of God. To be spiritually alive means there is union with God or the opposite of spiritual separation (death). This union is life, light and holiness because the union is with God.

In direct contrast, the removal of the strong man (Mt. 12:29 - Satan) along with his moral defilements from the spirit of man (Tit. 3:5) is by a creative act (Eph. 2:10) that brings the human spirit into spiritual union with God, thus restoring the moral “*image*” of God (Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10). That creative act is called the new birth (Eph. 2:1, 5, 10; Jn. 3:6). The new birth is uniting your spirit with the Spirit of God which is indwelling by the Spirit of God (Rom.8:8-9) and which is the “*seal*” of God.

Apart from spiritual union with the Spirit of God (new birth) there is no spiritual capacity to “*see*” or “*enter*” the spiritual, and ultimately the coming physical kingdom (realm) of God. Spiritually dead (separated) people cannot worship God, because worship must be “*in spirit*”, and they are without the Spirit of God, and are separated or “*alienated*” (Eph. 4:18) from God. All who are in this condition are “*in the flesh*” (Rom. 8:8a) or a state of natural birth and “*cannot please God*” (Rom. 8:8b). Such are “*none of his*” (Rom. 8:9).

Therefore, since true worship consists in doing what pleases God, the unregenerate condition has no capacity for worship “*in spirit*.” The new birth provides that capacity. Therefore, a person’s

Essential Worship

spirit “*must*” be born again (Jn. 3:6) or they cannot “*see*”⁵ or “*enter*” the kingdom of God, much less worship God “*in spirit*.”

B. Spiritual Capability

Without me ye can do nothing – Jn. 15:5b

*If we live in the spirit, **let us also walk** in the spirit.* – Gal. 5:25

For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure – Philip. 2:13

All three texts are addressing born again believers. If a born again person cannot do anything in their own strength, how much more is that true of the unregenerate?

When the spirit of man is regenerated, the moral inclination of the soul (intellect, will and affections) is changed from rebellion against God unto willingness to obey God (Rom. 7:22). However, even though the law of indwelling sin has been removed from its

⁵ The term “*see*” means to perceive or understand spiritual things (Deut. 24:5; 1 Cor. 2:14). This does not mean they cannot understand the language of the Bible. If they can read English, they can understand the language they are reading. However, there is a distinction between understanding the language they are reading and comprehending and accepting the thoughts being conveyed by that language. Man’s mind is much like a computer. The mind has received data and all new data is compared and either accepted or rejected according to how it fits the data already received as truth. The lost man’s mind has been programmed according to the world’s system of thinking, and therefore what God’s Word teaches simply does not fit or make sense with the accepted data that forms his pattern of thinking. The new birth or moral renewal of the spirit is required to provide something that the teaching of Scripture can fit or harmonize with.

Essential Worship

dominance over the regenerated spirit of man, it has not been removed from the entire man. It has been removed unto the body and operates in the child of God warring against the soul through the natural appetites (cravings) of the body (Rom. 7:15-21). Neither the soul, nor the regenerate spirit is able to overcome the power of indwelling sin. In spite of the fact, that the ruling inclination of our soul delights in the Law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:22 - born again spirit), the law of sin still dominates the soul (Rom. 7:18) at all times when the soul does not “*put on*” the inward new man by the power of the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 8:9-13). Why? The power over sin is not found in our soul or the regenerated spirit, but in the indwelling Person of the Holy Spirit of Christ. Therefore, “*without me ye can do nothing.*” This is due to the fallen nature in all men between Genesis and Revelation. Hence, no man, unregenerate or regenerate between Genesis and Revelation has power to please God except through spiritual union with the Spirit of God by new birth. Therefore, the only man that pleases God is the one “*God worketh in....both will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philip. 2:13).

This is precisely why Paul admonishes Christian readers, “*if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:25) because the power to please God, or the power for worship, or the power to overcome indwelling sin is not found in the soul (intellect, will and affections), or in our regenerated spirit, but in the indwelling Spirit of God alone.

If this is true of the regenerate man (and it is), then how much more incapable is the unregenerate man? That is why all who are “*in the flesh, cannot please God*” (Rom. 8:8). Worship consists in pleasing God. That is why a person “*must be born again.*”

Therefore, only as our soul (self-consciousness) determinately yields to the Holy Spirit can we live out the Christian life. Living

Essential Worship

out this Christian life by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God is the essence of true worship. Any person under the leadership of the Spirit will not offer unacceptable worship or false worship. If they do act in disobedience to the Word of God that is evidence they are not acting under the leadership of the Spirit.

So it is not enough simply to be born again and have the *capacity* for worship, but one must be “*filled*” or under the leadership of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) in order to have the *capability* that to please God.

As we will see later, whatsoever you do, if it is going to be done for the glory of God, requires not only the right motive and new birth, but the power of God. Therefore, to preach, sing, worship, pray, be a good father, mother or child or worker or “*whatsoever ye do*” one must do it “*in the Spirit.*”

This has nothing to do with a second work of grace, or baptism in the Spirit, or speaking with tongues, but simply walking, as you received Christ in salvation:

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: - Col. 2:6

How did you receive him? You received him by the power of the Holy Spirit in a spirit of complete self-denial and submission (Rom. 4:21). We resist the world, the devil, and the flesh by simply submitting/yielding to the Spirit of God by faith, trusting him to empower us to perform His revealed will in our lives. What He empowers or works out through us is the “*beauty of holiness*” and a life offered up as a sweet savor unto God, an acceptable sacrifice. Our whole personal life is to be one continuous act of worship in all that we think, say and do.

Essential Worship

Right doctrine is not sufficient for true worship. There must be both spiritual capacity (new birth) and capability (empowerment by the indwelling Spirit) to live out that doctrine. To worship in spirit is simply to walk or live by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.⁶

C. Spiritual Character

The manifestation of walking in the Spirit is the (1) fruit of the Spirit; (2) and comprehensiveness or holistic character of the offering being offered.

1. The Fruit of the Spirit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. – Gal. 5:22-25

It is impossible to live in the Spirit without manifesting the “fruit” of the Spirit, as that “fruit” is the evidence of Spiritual control and power.

Love is the chief fruit of the Spirit. Love rejoices in truth, but does not rejoice in iniquity (1 Cor. 13:5). In direct contrast, the works of the flesh include strife, seditions, and heresies. False doctrine is the fruit of the flesh and has its source with demons (1 Tim. 4:1).

⁶ Saints prior to the cross had the same problem of sin we do. They were born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:1-6) and could walk “in the Spirit” or walk after the flesh.

Essential Worship

Where the “**works of the flesh**” are present, the empowering of the Spirit is not present, and worship ceases to exist. Some of the works of the flesh are these:

*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, **strife, seditions, heresies**, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. – Gal. 5:19-21*

Recently, a young lady was fearful of going back to a certain church because the people had not been friendly. I told her if that were so, then she was going to the wrong church, and she should find one that would manifest the fruits of the Spirit toward her. Spirituality is not found in the gifts of the Spirit, but in the fruits of the Spirit. The church at Corinth had all the gifts of the Spirit but was still “*carnal*”:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? – 1 Cor. 3:1-3

Personal worship is the offering up of your *daily* life through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, as an acceptable and sweet savor unto God. Jesus said that no man could be his disciple that did not take up his cross “daily” and follow him. Daily death to

Essential Worship

self is daily submission to the Spirit, and the evidence of that is the “fruit” of the Spirit.

2. The Comprehensiveness of the Sacrifice offered

That brings us to the next aspect of the true spiritual character of personal worship, which is the comprehensiveness of the sacrifice offered. Personal worship is holistic:

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. – 1 Cor. 10:31

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. – Col. 3:17

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; - Col. 3:23

Many live a segmented and compartmentalized life. They speak of their *work life* in contrast to their *home life* or speak of their *church life* in contrast to the rest of their life. The truth is that God claims interest and ownership of your whole life. If your church life or *public* worship is not consistent with every other aspect of your life, then you are a hypocrite and your *public* worship is unacceptable unto God.

Your whole life is interrelated, and your whole life is to be a life of personal worship unto God. Your whole life is to be empowered by the Spirit of God manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in all that you think, say and do.

Essential Worship

We have now come to the very crux of *personal* worship. The scriptures teach that our whole life, seven days a week is to be a sacrifice offered up to the Lord, and the sacrifice was the center piece of true worship.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. – Rom. 12:1

Notice that you cannot present your body any way you please. It is to be presented unto God “*a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable.*” He is speaking of your whole life, as you live out your whole life in and through your body. Your body is merely a vehicle to carry out your thoughts and will. Your body becomes a “*living sacrifice, holy and acceptable*” when it is carrying out God’s thoughts and will (Philip. 2:13). That state is the life of the Spirit and life more abundantly.

The child of God is to live moment by moment in conscious submission to the leadership of the Spirit. This is what is meant by the command to “*pray without ceasing.*” It is living in a conscious state of dependence upon God, conscious of His presence in submission to His revealed will. Prayer is an act of worship, and we are to be living in a state of worship.

Your life as a whole is the essence of personal worship and is the offering you bring to God daily. The things we say and do while under the leadership of the Spirit are described as “*offerings*” or “*sacrifices*” –

But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. – Heb. 13:16

Essential Worship

Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. – Philip. 2:17

But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. – Philip. 4:18

Obedience to the revealed will of God is considered sweet smelling sacrifices of worship unto God. Therefore, worship in “*the beauty of holiness*” is when our prayers, giving, singing, and etc., all conform to the word of God in the manifest character or fruit of the Spirit. That is the summation of “*the beauty of holiness*” before God.

Many live any way they like, but then come to church on Sunday and go through the actions for a few hours, and then walk out the door and live like the devil the rest of the week.

Many are fighting and fussing all the way to church and then enter into the assembly and sing “*O how I love Jesus*.” Such is not acceptable personal worship before, or after they enter the assembly. Public worship has its validity in personal worship seven days a week, without which, public worship is empty and void.

Complete worship does not require sinlessness, but it does require keeping your sins confessed, and walking in a right relationship with God daily (1 Jn. 1:7-10).

These essentials for personal worship (spiritual capacity, spiritual capability, spiritual character and spiritual comprehensiveness) are essential **preparation** for *public* worship.

Essential Worship

II. Worship must be in Truth

*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and **in truth**: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and **in truth**.* – Jn. 4:23-24

True worship is everything that characterizes what you think, say and do under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit never leads or empowers anyone to violate His own inspired revealed word, as he is not the “*author of confusion*” but “**the Spirit of truth**” and leads into “*all truth*.” Hence, all who profess to be offering up true worship, or confess to be under the leadership of the Spirit, but are expressing that which is contradictory to the truth are not really being led, empowered or worshipping by the Holy Spirit.

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. – Isa. 8:20

That brings us to the question, “*what is truth?*” Remember, that was the question Pilate asked Jesus. It is still being asked today. The answer is “**truth is everything consistent with the nature of God, and the will of God, as revealed in the word of God.**” This is clearly the definition given by Jesus Christ. In regard to His own Person, he said – “**I am the...truth**” (Jn. 14:6). In regard to the scriptures he said – “**thy word is truth**” (Jn. 17:17).⁷ Therefore, truth is everything consistent with the nature of God and the will of God, as revealed in the Word of God.

⁷ All who oppose or deny the Scriptures as final authority for faith and practice are not true worshippers of God or friends of God.

Essential Worship

The Holy Spirit sanctifies or sets apart the children of God in keeping with the truth revealed in the scriptures. “*Sanctify them by thy word for thy word is truth*” (Jn. 17:17).

Remember, that worship performed “*in the flesh*” is never acceptable worship before God. Many do not realize that the works of the flesh include “*strife, seditions*” and “*heresies*”

*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these.....Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, **strife, seditions, heresies**, – Gal. 5:19,20*

False doctrines (“heresies”) originate with the “*spirit of error*” or demonic influences:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; - 1 Tim. 4:1

Unacceptable worship originates with the “*spirit of error*” and is manifested by “*doctrines of devils*” and disobedience to God’s will as revealed in God’s Word.

Hence, those who are really Spirit filled are also in submission to the will of the Holy Spirit. Obedience to the will of God, as revealed in Scriptures, is part and parcel with being spiritual. Disobedience to God’s Word is a spiritual problem. Any time disobedience to God’s word is being manifest, that is proof such a person is not being led by the Spirit. Any time a person is not

Essential Worship

being led by the Spirit, worship has ceased and sin is being manifested.⁸

Therefore, all acceptable worship is an expression of obedience to God's revealed will, just as all unacceptable worship (will worship, idolatrous worship, ignorant worship, etc.) is an expression of disobedience to the revealed will of God – His Word (Isa. 8:20).

So it is not a choice between sincere or proper worship, but both are required for worship to be true worship. A person can be sincerely wrong. Sincerity does not always indicate spirituality. Those who practice witchcraft may be very sincere, but sincerely wrong. True worship must be “*spiritual*” and the Holy Spirit is the “*Spirit of truth*.” True personal worship ceases when the worshipper begins operating “*in the flesh*.”

A. Two Doctrines that characterize all true Worship

Obviously, no individual Christian knows all truth. Every Christian is given a measure of grace, faith and understanding of God's Word. True worship occurs when that Christian is operating within those perimeters of grace, faith and understanding.

In the previous chapter under “Worship in spirit” we have noted some *spiritual* characteristics that are essential for all true worship. However, there are some doctrinal truths that are necessary to

⁸ Remember Satan appears as an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness. Those operating in the flesh can appear to have a good attitude or counterfeit fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is never manifested in open disobedience to God's revealed will. Those practicing false doctrine with what appears to be a good attitude is nothing less than counterfeit fruit of the Spirit.

Essential Worship

worship “*in truth*” that must be embraced and must characterize all true worshippers and worship of God.

These two doctrinal essentials must be recognized in order to distinguish counterfeit Christians and counterfeit fruit of the Spirit from the genuine. Two essential truths are (1) the truth about God and, (2) the truth about salvation.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. – Jn. 17:3

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. – Gal. 1:8-9

Any person who worships outside the truth of God is an idolater and any person who worships outside the truth of salvation is a lost person.

1. The Truth of God’s Nature

Jesus says “*this is eternal life*” in knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.⁹ Jesus is not denying He is

⁹ Jesus is not denying that He is God. Christ was God in the flesh (Jn. 1:1). However, his humanity is not deified. He was fully man, and the human nature is not to be confused with the nature of God. The Son possessed all Divine attributes. Salvation is the revelation of the true God in the face of Jesus Christ in the heart (2 Cor. 4:6).

Essential Worship

God, or someone else in addition to God. Rather, the true character of God is only revealed to men by the Holy Spirit through the person and works of Jesus Christ. When Jesus was asked by his disciples to show them the Father, He responded that he that hath seen him has seen the Father (Jn. 14:7-11). Not that the Father has a visible form, or that Jesus **is** the Father. Jesus came to reveal what God is like in human flesh. To know Jesus Christ is to know God, as Jesus is God the Son veiled in human form (Philip. 2:6-7). To believe in Christ (Jn. 3:36) is to believe in God (Jn. 5:24) and to reject Jesus Christ is to reject God. This is why Jesus said,

*And this is life eternal, that they might **know thee** the only true God, **and** Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. – Jn. 17:3*

That is why true salvation is the revelation of the true God in the person of Jesus Christ. Those who have eternal life (children of God) know who God really is, because in the act of salvation, God is revealed to them through the person of Jesus Christ:

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, **to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**. – 2 Cor. 4:6*

Jesus Christ can only be revealed by the Father through the Holy Spirit:

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said

Essential Worship

unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. – Mt. 16:16-17

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: - Ga. 1:15-16

The Father never reveals the Son by the Holy Spirit contrary to the Biblical doctrine of Christ:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. – 2 Jn. 9-11

In other words, the Holy Spirit never reveals Jesus Christ outside or contrary to his true Biblical character or relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit. A new child of God may not understand “*the doctrine of Christ*” or be able to explain or defend it, but the Christ revealed in him by the Father in connection with the Gospel is not contrary to the Biblical doctrine of Christ. He does not perceive him to be the Father or the Holy Spirit. Neither does he perceive him to be a created being or a mere man (Jn. 1:1)

He perceives him to be his Savior, but yet “*the Son of God*” in human form, and therefore, his LORD. Hence the truths about God and Salvation are inseparable truths and essential for true worship.

Essential Worship

True worship “*must*” have for its object the one true Triune God. The true God is known by his attributes, as his attributes define who He is, and sets Him apart from His creation and from all false gods.¹⁰

All the Old Testament prophets believed in Christ as their redeemer for the remission of sins (Acts 10:43). David was a prophet (Acts 2:23) who believed in, and recognized the Messiah (the Christ) as his “Lord” (Psa. 110:1; Mt. 22:32-37).

David was the primary author of the book of Psalms. The Psalms are lyrics set to music that were used in the house of God for public worship. Significantly, the attributes and the unique works of God due to those attributes are the subject matter of much of the Psalms. The attributes of God make God to be God. The many works of God for His people are the products of His marvelous attributes. Praising and thanking God for such works and magnifying His attributes that manifest such works gives him the honor which he deserves which is the essence of true worship.

It is a serious error to deny or pervert the attributes or nature of God.¹¹ This error is defined as idolatry by Scripture. Idolatry is first a mental perversion of God. This mental perversion is then

¹⁰ There are two classifications of attributes belonging to God. There are those attributes that he alone possesses that cannot be communicated or transferred to creatures. These make God to be God (eternity, immutability, self-sufficiency, etc.). There are other attributes that He can communicate to creatures (morality, love, rationality, etc.).

¹¹ A person can be saved and be ignorant of the attributes of God. However, no person can be saved who at the time they profess to be saved is embracing a false or distorted belief of God (Jn. 17:3).

Essential Worship

manifested in either visible images (graven, painted, etc.) and/or verbal perversions (false doctrine).¹²

No true worship can occur by any *professing* child of God who rejects or perverts the essential nature of God, as that is the essence of idolatry. No true salvation can occur while a person is still in a state of rejecting the Biblical revelation of God.¹³

2. The Truth of Salvation

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. – Jn. 17:3

Jesus makes it clear that eternal life is inseparable from knowing the true God, as he says “*this is life eternal, that they might know thee....*” Eternal life is being brought into spiritual union with God, apart from which, there can be no worship “*in spirit.*”

The unregenerated man is “*alienated from the life of God through ignorance through the blindness of heart*” (Eph. 4:18) whereas, salvation is the reversal of that heart “*ignorance*” and “*blindness of heart*” obtained through the creative power of God that commands “*the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the*

¹² Mormons, Roman Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, New Age Christianity, United Pentecostalism and Word of Faith Ministries, etc., all distort the true God of the Bible.

¹³ To be ignorant of all that God is, is one thing, but to openly reject the true nature of God and/or openly reject any of the Triune Godhead, as God, makes salvation impossible, as the object of their faith is not the true God. That is person is an idolater.

Essential Worship

face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6) in the heart. This occurs when the gospel comes to a person “*not in word only*” but becomes the creative word of power (Eph. 2:1, 5, 10) by which the Holy Spirit reveals Christ within the heart of God’s elect.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. – 1 Thes. 1:5

Unfortunately, there is “*another gospel*” as well as “*another Jesus*” preached among men, as another way of salvation that is “*accursed*” (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:4).

The professing kingdom of God is full of “*tares*” (Mt. 13), or false professors, and one significant indication of “*tares*” is their profession in “*another gospel*” or “*another Jesus*” than the gospel and Jesus clearly revealed in the scriptures. God does not accept worship by lost religious people or by idolaters.

Conclusion

First, personal worship must be “*in spirit.*” It must be in the capacity of spirit – new birth. It must be in the capability of spirit – filling of the Spirit. It is manifested by the character of spirit – fruit of the Spirit. It must be comprehensive rather than compartmental or else your worship is hypocritical in nature. All worship conducted “*in the flesh*” is unacceptable worship.

Second, personal worship must be “*in truth.*” Open disobedience to the revealed will of God is unacceptable worship. In addition

Essential Worship

there are at least two essential truths that must characterize all acceptable worship. (1) The one Triune God must be the sole object of Worship. (2) The true gospel must be the sole foundation for true acceptable worship.

Essential Worship

CHAPTER THREE Essentials of Public Worship

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. – 1 Tim. 3:15

In this chapter we will deal with the common likenesses and vast differences between personal and public worship.

With regard to common likenesses, both share the same characteristics of worshipping God “*in spirit and in truth.*” With regard to worship “*in truth*” public worship is vastly more comprehensive than personal worship in its external form.

For example, public worship is inclusive of more than one individual coming together in a public setting to worship God. Public worship requires a visible assembly of two or more persons. Such public worship between two or more persons requires coordination between them, such as an appointed time and place to assemble for worship. Moreover, corporate worship must be unified in its form or else that worship may end up being idolatrous, indecent, disorderly and vain worship rather than what glorifies God.

The most often used singular phrase to characterize unified public worship in Scripture is “*the house of God*” and/or its synonyms (e.g. “the Lord’s house” etc.). The very mention of this phrase among Jews immediately brought to mind all of these characteristics. When the Jew thought about, or even mentioned

Essential Worship

“*the house of God*” what immediately came to mind was the appointed time, place and acceptable pattern for organized worship (Deut. 12).

But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

8 Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.

9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.

10 But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;

11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:

12 And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that

Essential Worship

is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: - Deut. 12:5-13

Significantly, the phrase “*the house of God*” brought to mind chiefly the divine “*pattern*” that provided the correct public form of worship that made it “*acceptable*” in God’s sight.

The “Pattern” for Acceptable Public Worship

This “*pattern*” that establishes “*acceptable*” public worship in the sight of God is repeated often in the Old Testament. It is first spelled out with greater detail with the institution of the Mosaic Tabernacle, then Solomon’s temple and finally the temple revealed to Ezekiel:

A. The Mosaic House of God – the Tabernacle

When God provided a public place to meet with Israel he instructed Moses to build it according to a specific pattern:

*According to all that I shew thee, **after the pattern** of the tabernacle, and **the pattern** of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.* – Ex. 25:9

*And look that thou make them **after their pattern**, which was shewed thee in the mount.* – Ex. 25:40

Essential Worship

And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the LORD had shewed Moses, so he made the candlestick. – Numb. 8:4

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. – Heb. 8:5

Later, we will see that conformity to the pattern in all things was necessary to manifest the two great truths about God and His plan of redemption.

B. Solomon’s House of God – the Temple

God provided the pattern for a new house of God to David, who in turn gave it to Solomon to build:

Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, - 1 Chron. 28:11

And the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: - 1 Chon. 28:12

Essential Worship

And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. – 1 Chron. 28:18

All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern. – 1 Chron. 28:19

B. Ezekiel's House of God

God provided Ezekiel the pattern for the house of God in Ezekiel 43-46.

Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house. And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this shall be the higher place of the altar. – Ezek. 43:10-13

Essential Worship

The Jewish mind could not conceive of public worship apart from the “*house of God*” and they could not think of “*the house of God*” apart from the divine “*pattern*” that qualified acceptable public worship.

The Public Pattern Glorifies God

In a previous chapter that dealt with personal worship with regard to worshipping “*in truth*” it was established that the gospel is inseparable from the true nature of God, and the true way of salvation (e.g. Jn. 17:3; 2 Cor. 4:6).

These same two great truths characterize the divine “*pattern*” in every detail of “*the house of God*” in its structure, furniture, ordinances and ministry. The Old Testament “*house of God*” was designed in its every detail to symbolically express these two great truths about God and salvation. This is made clear in just a casual reading of the book of Hebrews. The nature of God and his redemptive plan is the two repetitive themes throughout Hebrews 1-11. These same repetitive themes characterize the New Testament house of God in Hebrews 12-13.

It is this “*pattern*” that provided every detail that was necessary to symbolically express these two great truths. It is conformity with these two great truths that makes it both “*the house of God*” and “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*”

The failure to conform to this divine “*pattern*” with regard to its structure, furniture, ordinances and ministry always resulted in condemnation of public worship. This can be seen no better than in King Jeroboam’s attempt to furnish public worship for the northern ten tribes of Israel by deviating from the divine pattern

Essential Worship

God had established and devising a system of worship out of “*his own heart.*”

And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense. 1 Kngs. 12:31-33

He ignored the qualifications for the priesthood set forth in God’s “*pattern.*” He ignored the qualifications for the altar and sacrifices set forth in God’s “*pattern.*” He devised his own pattern or system for public worship. He chose his own way instead of “*the way of the Lord.*” The phrase “*the way of the Lord*” refers to God’s pattern of worship in the Old Testament.

This new house of God and its new priests with its new ordinances which had been “*devised of his own heart*” continued as the form of public worship right up to the New Testament period in Samaria. Jesus condemned Jeroboam’s pattern or system of worship by saying, “*Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews*” – Jn. 4:22. Notice his condemnation included the truth about God (“*ye worship ye know not what*”) and the truth about salvation (“*for salvation is of the Jews*”). When one deviates from God’s “*pattern*” for public worship at any point, either the truth about

Essential Worship

God and/or about salvation is perverted and truth is lost and ignorance prevails in connection with the true nature of God and/or the true nature of salvation. Why? The “*pattern*” designed by God for public worship manifests these two truths.

Another prime example where men deviated from God’s public “*pattern*” for worship is when Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, rejected the fire that God had already kindled upon the altar (Lev. 9:24), but found another source of fire to kindle their censers. God rejected their worship and killed them (Lev. 10 – more on this in a later chapter). When king David attempted to conduct public worship with all of Israel (1 Chron. 13:1-8), but departed from the appointed “*pattern*” which revealed the “*due order*” (1 Chron. 15:12-13) for transporting the ark of the tabernacle, God rejected their worship and killed Uzza (1 Chron. 13:9-10). However, when they conformed to the “*due order*” their worship was accepted in the sight of God (1 Chron. 14:14-15).

The former rejected worship was centered around the “ark” the foremost form that manifested God (He dwelt between the cherubims) and His plan of redemption. Their former rejected worship was embraced by the majority of God’s people (1 Chron. 12:1-3) and leadership. Their former rejected worship was conducted in the right spirit and characterized by praise. However, when they departed from God’s revealed pattern, it perverted the very thing that was designed to symbolize the true God and true salvation and made their worship unacceptable in God’s sight.

When God’s “*due order*” set forth in his pattern is changed, perverted or violated, so are these two great truths perverted. Proper observation of that “*due order*” defines the very nature of acceptable public service in and through the house of God. Ultimately, it is the proper observation of that “*due order*” which

Essential Worship

defines what it means to glorify God by Christ in the house of God (Eph. 3:21).

It glorifies God, because observing God's pattern for public worship properly manifests the truth about God. It glorifies God, because observing his pattern for public worship properly manifests the truth about God's provision of salvation through Christ. True and acceptable public worship is all about observing God's pattern. Those truths are woven into the pattern of the constitution of God's house. Those truths are woven into all the details of the "*pattern*" for its public ordained ministry and ordinances. When anyone deviates from that divine "*pattern*" God is robbed of His glory and these two truths are publicly perverted.

Qualified Ministers and Ordinances

When the Jew thought of the "*house of God*" they could not conceive of public worship apart from a properly qualified ministry who administered properly qualified ordinances.

God established qualifications for those who would administer the ordinances in the house of God. Only Levites could minister in the public house of God, and then only Levites that met certain divine qualifications. God's pattern for the ministry in the public house of worship included every detail about their work, their dress, and their character. In all of these details the great truths about God and salvation were symbolically manifested. When God's pattern was not followed, these truths were perverted and so the priests perverting it were put to death.

Essential Worship

In addition, not just any kind of ordinances could be administered in the house of God, and not just any kind of offerings could be offered unto God in public worship. God qualified what offerings were acceptable unto him (Lev. 1-7). Every detail in God's "*pattern*" which defined "*acceptable*" worship with regard to all the offerings symbolized the great truths about the nature of God and redemption. When God's pattern was not followed these truths were perverted.

However, when all forms were followed precisely, but the worship was not conducted "*in spirit*" God also rejected their worship:

The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind? – Prov. 21:27

Hence, when the Jew heard the words, or read the words "*the house of God*" what came immediately to his mind was an appointed place for public worship, at an appointed time, where a qualified public ministry administered qualified public ordinances, all of which qualified "*acceptable*" public worship unto God.

But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and

Essential Worship

your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

8 Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.

9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.

10 But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;

11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:

12 And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: - Deut. 12:5-13

The New Testament Pattern for Public Worship

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. – 1 Tim. 3:15

Essential Worship

The phrase “*the house of God*” is only found 88 times in the Scriptures. The 86th instance is found in 1 Tim. 3:15. Significantly, all 85 instances previous to 1 Tim. 3:15 refer to the Jewish public house of worship built according to a divine pattern, with a qualified public ministry and qualified public ordinances.

In this 86th instance, it is found in the context of a public qualified ministry (1 Tim. 3:1-13) and the two major truths about God and salvation (1 Tim. 3:16). The very application of the phrase “*the house of God*” to the “*church*” by this Jewish Paul to Timothy, who was raised by a Jewish mother and grandmother could only convey one thing. The New Testament church, along with its membership, ministry, ordinances and mission were all designed by God according to a divine pattern. That pattern is laid down in the New Testament Scriptures.

It means that its pattern in all these areas is designed to manifest the great truth about God and His salvation, and proper observation of this pattern defines acceptable public worship and divine service whereby God is glorified by Christ in the church (Eph. 3:21). It is observance of this divine pattern that defines it as “*the house of God*” and makes it “*the pillar and ground of truth.*”

Notice the contextual emphasis on the true God and his provision of salvation:

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. 1 Tim. 3:15-16

Essential Worship

The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that just as the Old Covenant had a qualified house of God with a qualified ministry and ordinances, so under the New Covenant there is also a qualified house of God with a qualified ministry and ordinances:

*Then verily the first covenant had **also** ordinances of divine service, **and** a worldly sanctuary.* – Heb.9:1

The phrase “*a worldly sanctuary*” simply means a sanctuary located in this world where “*divine services*” were performed in connection with “*ordinances.*” The words “*also...and*” confirm that under the New Covenant the same public forms of worship still exist.

This means that the establishment of the church, its members, its officers, its ordinances and mission are all designed according to a divine pattern that characterizes “*the house of God*” in all ages.

There are seven consistent characteristics of this divine pattern that characterize every house of God found in the scriptures:

1. Public qualified builder

- a. The Tabernacle – Moses
- b. The Temple – Solomon
- c. The Church – Christ

2. Public Qualified Sacrifices

- a. The Tabernacle – Lev. 1-8
- b. The Temple – Lev.1-8
- c. The Church – 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-20

3. Public Qualified Ministry

- a. The Tabernacle – Levite Priesthood
- b. The Temple – Levite Priesthood

Essential Worship

c. The Church – Acts 1:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13; Acts 6

4. Public Qualified ordinances

a. The Tabernacle- Leviticus

b. The Temple - Leviticus

c. The Church – Lk. 7:29-30; Mt. 26:12-30; 1 Cor. 5, 10, 11

5. Public Authorized system of faith and practice

a. The Tabernacle – Deut. 12

b. The Temple – Deut 12

c. The Church – Mt. 18:17-18; 28:18-20; Acts 2:1-3, 41

6. Public Accreditation by fire and immersion in the Shekinah glory of God

a. The Tabernacle – Ex. 40:36-37

b. The Temple – 2 Chron. 7:1-3

c. The Church – Acts 2:1-3

7. Public Confirmation of Perpetuity

a. The Tabernacle – Lev. 6:12-13

b. The Temple – 2 Chron. 7:1 with Lev. 6:12-13

c. The Church – Mt. 16:18; 28:20; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:

It is this qualified “*pattern*” that makes it “*the house of God*” and “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” for “*acceptable*” public worship in the sight of God. Departure from this qualified “*pattern*” is apostasy and unacceptable public worship.

Essential Worship

The New Testament Appointed Place for Public Worship

Individual worship has no appointed time or place but is 24/7 in all places at all times. However, public worship has always had an appointed place and time for “*acceptable*” worship according to a divine “*pattern.*”

There is abundant Scriptural evidence that the New Testament congregation corresponds to the Biblical concept of “*the house of God*” as the appointed place for “*acceptable*” public worship.

A. It is a Located House of God:

Writing to the church of God “*which is at Corinth*” (1 Cor. 1:2) Paul described “*the church*” as an assembly, that habitually assembles together in a certain place:

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.....When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper..... Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come. – 1 Cor. 11:17-18,20, 33-34

The Lord's Supper cannot be observed by “*the church*” apart from actually assembling together in one place. The Lord's Supper was one of the church ordinances which must be observed

Essential Worship

according to the divine pattern established by Christ. They had departed from that divine pattern, and Paul was rebuking them and directing them to return to the observing the divine pattern for this ordinance. Departure from the divine pattern for this ordinance rendered their observance to be invalid so that what they were doing “*is not to eat the Lord’s Supper*” (1 Cor. 11:20).

On the day of Pentecost, “*the church*” (Acts 2:46) which was “*added unto*” (Acts 2:41) was first gathered together into one place:

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. – Acts 2:1

The New Testament congregation is the designated house for public worship. Paul, writing again to the church of God which is at Corinth instructs them to bring their offerings to the assembly on the first day of the week when he would assemble with them:

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. – 1 Cor. 16:1-2

In the Old Testament, the offerings were brought to “*the house of God*” as the “*store*” house upon the Lord’s Day:

But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings,

Essential Worship

and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: - Deut. 12:5-6

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. – Mal. 3:7-10

Therefore, the New Testament congregation is the public house of God where qualified ordinances are administered, and where tithes and offerings are to be brought at an appointed time – the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week.

B. It is a qualified “house of God”

Its constitution is according to a divine pattern revealed in the New Testament Scriptures (Mt. 28:19-20). They are first to evangelize by going with the gospel (Mk.16:15). Second, they are to administer baptism to those who receive the gospel (“*baptizing them...*”). Third, they are to assemble with them in order to instruct the in the proper observance of all things Christ commanded. This is how a church is constituted and how an existing church grows as it is “*added unto*” after this fashion:

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the

Essential Worship

apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. – Acts 2:41-42

The Great Commission is a pattern for reproducing churches of like faith and order.

New Testament congregations were made up of only those who personally received the truth of the gospel (“*they that gladly received his word*”) and willingly submitted to baptism (“*were baptized*”). There is no congregation that can be found in the New Testament that was not made up of baptized believers. That is the divine pattern revealed in scriptures. Departure from that pattern distorts the great truths of redemption by adding unbelievers as members of “*the house of God.*”

Moreover, just as the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper must be observed after a divine pattern revealed in the New Testament, so must the ordinance of baptism. The divine pattern for baptism demands four qualifications:

1. The right candidate – a professed believer in Christ
2. The right mode – immersion only¹⁴
3. The right motive – public symbolic identification
4. The right authority – Church administration in the name of the Triune God.

¹⁴ In baptism we are said to be “buried” with Christ (Rom. 4:5; Col. 2:12). The value of any symbol is the right portrayal of the truth it is designed to convey. Sprinkling and pouring cannot convey the truth of Christ’s “burial.” Moreover, the Greek language has specific words for sprinkling (*rantizo*) and pouring (*ephicheo*) and neither is ever used for this ordinance. The Greek has a technical term for submerging, or immersing and that is *baptizo*, and *baptizo* is the only Greek term used to describe this ordinance.

Essential Worship

Notice that such qualifications manifest the true nature of God and the true nature of salvation and thus conformity to the two major themes that characterize the “*pattern*” for all the ordinances in the “*house of God*.”

There are many individual baptisms recorded in Scripture, but there is not a single case, or single mention of any infant being baptized in the New Testament record. Every “*household*” baptism in the book of Acts is completely silent about the inclusion of infants, but completely clear that such households were composed of members who could repent and believe.¹⁵

The ordinances of the New Testament house of God must conform to a revealed pattern as much as the ordinances that characterized the Old Testament house of God.

Moreover, this is an assembly with a qualified ministry (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13) or qualified administrators of the ordinances. Just as the former public house of worship had a qualified ministry to administer its ordinances (Lev. 1-10) so the New Testament public house of worship has a qualified ministry that oversees public worship and administration of the ordinances. Such men are directly called by God but then additionally confirmed by the

¹⁵ Infant males at 8 days of age were circumcised because the Old Covenant was composed of types of salvation. The 8 day old infant under the New Covenant was a type of the new born believer in Christ under the New Covenant. Dying infants and others who are unable to distinguish between right and wrong, and thus unable to sin willfully cannot be condemned on the day of judgment because the standard of condemnation on that day is “according to your work” in violation of the Law of God. Such are incapable of willfully violating the Law of God and therefore have no such “works.” Christ atoned for “the sin” of Adam (Jn. 1:29) so that none could be ultimately judged for that particular sin, but only for their own individual works. Thus were sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

Essential Worship

house of God as qualified to fill that office (Acts 13:1-4). The officers in the New Testament house of God consist of Elders and Deacons (Philip. 1:1). There is no mention of a *Pope*, or *Priests* or *Cardinals* or *Archbishops* in the New Testament. There is no mention of any titles (*Right Reverend*) other such epithets in the New Testament. The Elders are males only, who are “*husbands of one wife*” and “*rule over their own households.*” This detail is by design to express a truth about Christ in his office of prophet, priest and king (1 Cor. 11:3, 7-9; Eph. 5:23-27, 30; 1 Cor. 14:33-37; 1 Tim. 2:11-14). They are a type of Christ while the women membership are a type of the church or Christ’s bride, therefore, the leadership functions of prophet, priest and king within the public worship is restricted to males only. When this revealed pattern is departed from, the Person of Christ and the church are distorted and perverted. The very relationship between the Divine Persons of the Triune God is perverted. When individuals who fail to measure up to the moral and doctrinal qualifications for the ordained ministry are put into this office, the very characteristics that are meant to convey the redemptive condition are perverted. Such are to be an “example” in those areas that convey a redeemed state of life.

Their office is characterized under three Greek terms (1) *presbuteros* – Acts 20:17; (2) *episkopas* – Acts 20:28; (3) *poimeino* – Acts 20:28; because they must be spiritually mature (*presbuteros*) to oversee (*episcopos*) and feed (*poimeino*) the church.

The very constitution of the membership of the church reflects the truth of the gospel. The New Testament “house of God” is composed of “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5) rather than a mixture of regenerate and unregenerate infants. The divine pattern for church membership is restricted to baptized believers only (Acts 2:41). When this divine pattern is deviated from then the very nature of

Essential Worship

redemption and the nature of God is perverted. Remember, the nature of God and redemption are inseparable truths (Jn. 17:3; 2 Cor. 4:6).

A true house of God conforms to the two great truths inseparably woven together in the gospel (the true God and true salvation). It is constituted to reflect these truths in the very materials that make up its membership. Its administration of the ordinances conform to these same two great truths. The qualifications for its officers are designed to manifest these same great truths.

The improper constitution of a church, and/or the improper administration of the ordinances preach “*another gospel*.”

The improper materials for its ordained leadership proclaims “*another Jesus*” because the divine pattern of qualifications for that office is designed to identify with Christ in His offices as prophet, priest and king.

All false or apostate churches can be easily identified by their departure from the constitutional pattern, and or departure from the ministry pattern, and/or their departure from the pattern of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

When a church is properly constituted and observing what Christ commanded (the pattern for public worship), it is assembled “*in my name*” (Mt. 18:20) regardless of how small that assembly may be, and the proper observance is evidence that Christ is in its midst. When such a church is observing what Christ commanded (Mt. 28:18-19) God is being glorified by Christ in the church (Eph. 3:21) and “*acceptable*” worship is the product.

Essential Worship

CHAPTER FOUR

The Pre-Mosaic Pattern of Worship

The earliest recorded event where two or more persons came unto a certain place, at a certain time to conduct a certain act of worship is found in Genesis chapter four with Cain and Abel. The reader should ask themselves, from whence did Cain and Abel get the concept that they should come together at a certain place and time and offer up something to the Lord? Why did they go to a certain place to do this? Either they were taught this by their parents and their parent's example as growing up, or God told them directly.

Although, the Scriptures do not expressly state from whence they received this instruction, the scriptures clearly infer the source of this instruction was found in Genesis 3:15-22. After Adam and Eve had sinned, and they were conscious of their nakedness, God preached to them the gospel (Gen. 3:15) followed by a clear illustration of the gospel in the killing of animals to supply "*coats*" of skins to cover the shame they felt due to sin. The internal exposure of their spiritual nakedness, or exposure of their sin by their conscience was manifested by their attempt to hide themselves and cover their physical nakedness (Gen. 3:22). Whenever a person's evil deeds are exposed by his conscience, he feels naked in the sight of God and men and will always attempt to conceal himself, as his conscience makes him **feel** that he is exposed to all around him.

This presentation of the gospel (Gen. 3:15) in connection with the sacrifice of animals to obtain a covering is a type of Jesus Christ being slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Hence, the gospel type (offering by blood) in connection with the preaching of the gospel is established in Genesis with the parents

Essential Worship

of Cain and Abel. Most likely, Cain and Abel received basic instruction about the essentials of worship from their parents.

Although, the *pattern* of public worship is greatly expanded under Moses and under Christ, the fundamental pattern for public worship is established right at the beginning of Genesis, and further expanded in the account of Cain and Abel.

Right from the very beginning of Genesis these three characteristics of public worship are clearly set forth. These concepts are illustrated in the account of Cain and Abel in Genesis chapter four:

1. An Appointed Public time – The Lord’s Day – Gen. 4:3
2. An Appointed Public place – The Lord’s House – Gen. 4:16
3. An Appointed Public Sacrifice – The Lord’s Lamb – Gen. 4:7

I. The Appointed Public Time

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. – Gen. 4:3

There has always been “*the Lord’s day*” or a day specifically set apart for public worship both prior to, and after Moses. In Genesis 4:3 the literal Hebrew text reads “*at the end of days.*” Most scholars see this as a reference to the Sabbath Day which God instituted following six working days. Jesus said that the Sabbath was “*made for man*” and not merely for God or for Jews (Mk. 2:26). No Jews existed when the Sabbath was “*made.*” Indeed, the children of Israel were reprimanded by God before the Ten

Essential Worship

Commandments were given to Moses (Ex. 20) for violating His Sabbath (Ex. 16:26-28). The Jews were called to “remember” the Sabbath, rather than to invent it. The Sabbath they were called to “remember” originated in Genesis 2:2-3.

Nowhere does scripture ever say that the Sabbath is the seventh day “*of the week*.” That phrase cannot be found in relationship to the Sabbath law anywhere in scripture. True, God provided a seven day pattern in Genesis 1-2 consisting of six working days followed by a seventh day of rest. True, our calendars follow that pattern in dividing months into weeks and years into weeks. However, neither the natural lunar month, nor the solar year is divisible by seven. There are twenty nine and a quarter days in a lunar month and a little over 365 days in a solar year. This means that the “week” is an imposition upon the natural clock of creation. The only thing commanded by God is there must be a pattern of seven days in total, wherein six working days precede the seventh Sabbath day. However, where this pattern of seven days is to begin and end in regard to our modern calendar is not due to any command prior to the cross. Indeed, it could not be entirely restricted by God to any particular day or date in any human calendar, as He himself applies the Sabbath law to a variety of days and longer periods of time within the Jewish calendar. The truth is that the Sabbath law demands only the pattern and principle of six preceding equal periods of time followed by the seventh equal period, which is to be observed as the Sabbath. This pattern and principle could be applied by God at any point within the human calendar of events. For example, in Leviticus 23 the Sabbath was applied to days of the month that fell on the 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 30th day, as well as, on the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th day of the calendar month. In the seventh month it was applied to the 10th day of that month. All of these were literal 24 hour days in keeping with Genesis 1-2:3. However, it was also applied to longer periods of time than a twenty four hour period (7th month, 7th year,

Essential Worship

50th year) in keeping with meaning of the Hebrew term *yom* translated “day” in Genesis 2:4. In Genesis 2:4 the Hebrew term *yom* is more than a 24 hour period of time and this secondary application of *yom* is in direct connection with the Sabbath institution in Genesis 2:3.

Hence, God could never restrict the Sabbath to the seventh day “*of the week*” without violating His own application of the Sabbath to other 24 hour days and longer periods of time. Hence, the command was sufficiently broad to include any specific period within the human calendar without restricting it to one specific application. It was not wrong to apply the Sabbath to the seventh day “*of the week*” any more than to the other days it was applied in Leviticus 23. However, we should not restrict God’s Sabbath Law to something narrower than what God Himself applied it.

The Old Covenant encumbered the creational Sabbath with ceremonial laws. However, under the New Covenant those ceremonial restrictions were abolished (Col. 2:16) and the Sabbath of the Lord returned to its simplicity, as a day of joy and gladness (Psa. 118:24), resting from doing our own things (Isa. 59:13), making it the “Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10), rather than our day. Under the new covenant it was set apart for public worship (Acts 2:1; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10). It was never designed to be a burden but a blessing to the people of God and never applied or forced in a legalistic manner.

Observance of a public Sabbath day (Heb. 4:9) will only be abolished when the believer enters not merely spiritual rest by faith in the gospel (Heb. 4:2), but soul rest in heaven (Heb. 4:11) and ultimately the eternal “day” of rest in spirit, soul and body in a new creation and new earth yet to come (Rev. 21:1-4). Hence, the fourth commandment still retains applications other than a mere 24

Essential Worship

hour day. The millennial reign is called “*the day of the Lord*” and the new heavens and new earth will be an eternal Sabbath.

Under the new covenant the “*first day of the week*” is the appointed day for public worship which commemorates the greater redemptive work of Christ (Heb. 4:10), and points forward to a coming yet unfulfilled rest when God can once again look upon all creation, and say it is “*very good*.”

Some imagine that Romans 14 condemns Sabbath keeping, when in fact Paul is dealing with cultural differences (days, food, drink) between Jews and Gentiles that are neither good nor evil in themselves rather than Biblical principles or precepts. The Sabbath under the Old Covenant is abolished and replaced by the “Lord’s Day” for New Testament Christians; (Col. 2:16; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10).

This is the unanimous practice of all Christians from the twentieth chapter of the gospel of John until Constantine the Great. Long before Constantine made Sunday observance Roman law, it was the revealed command of God (Psa. 118:25; Mk. 16:9) and practice of all Christians from the New Testament period to the third century.

Common sense dictates that public worship must have a recognizable public appointed time. Doing all things decently and in order demands a recognizable public appointed time. Hebrews 10:25 demands a regular appointed time. The example of Christ and the apostolic churches leave no room to doubt that there was an appointed day called “*the Lord’s Day*” and that designation was not given to every day of the week.

The Sabbath epitomizes the essence of worship. It commemorates a time when all of creation was in perfect harmony

Essential Worship

and at rest with God. It epitomizes a time and condition when God could look upon all His creation and say “very good.” Under the Mosaic legislation proper observation required sinless perfection and keeping of all other commandments in spirit and in practice. The Lord’s Day commemorates the redemptive work of Christ which does not merely restore peace between God and all creation but ushers in a better creation which can never be defiled by sin again.

II. The Appointed Public Place

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. – Gen. 4:16

Cain could not go out from the presence of an omnipresent God. David realized that in Psalm 139 when he said that whether he ascended into heaven or hell God was there.

Cain went out from the “*house of God*” or the particular place designated to meet God for public worship. That place was the location of the public altar upon which both Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices.

Later when Jacob built an altar for public worship he called it “*bethel*” or “*the house of God.*” God has always had a designated place to meet for public worship.

When Israel was taken into the wilderness they were instructed to build a public “*house of God*” or the “*tabernacle of the congregation*” where they would meet God for public worship.

Essential Worship

God gave very careful instructions to Israel before they entered the land of Palestine about the appointed place for public worship:

But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. – Deut. 12:6-8

The words “*the house of God*” are found 88 times in Scripture and in every case prior to 1 Timothy 3:15 it refers to the institutional house of God for public worship where there was a qualified public ministry administering qualified public ordinances in keeping with a qualified Biblical *pattern*.

In the New Testament, the congregation or assembly is the “*house of God*” as an authorized administrative body of baptized believers (Mt. 18:15-18). Moreover, this administrative body of baptized believers always meets together in “*one place*.”

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord **in one place**. – Acts 2:1*

*When ye **come together therefore into one place**, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. – 1 Cor. 11:20*

Essential Worship

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, - 1 Cor. 14:23

When the church is gathered together in one place it is for public worship:

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together;- Acts 4:31

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. – 1 Pet. 2:5

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.. – Acts 20:7

Paul writing the Hebrews instructed them not to forsake the appointed assemblies at the appointed place:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. – Heb. 10:25

All of these scriptures clearly indicate that they had an appointed place to meet as the “*house of God*”, and it was on the “*first day of the week*” or the “*Lord’s day*.” It is in the house of God, the church, where the manifest order of public worship is most clearly seen, and therefore, “*to God be glory by Christ in the church*” not only in this age, but in the age to come where the church will continue to be the best visible manifest expression of the glory of God.

Essential Worship

III. The Appointed Public Sacrifice

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain....

– Jude 11

*And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had **respect unto Abel** and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering **he had not respect**. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. – Gen. 4:4-5*

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. – Heb. 11:4

The apostle John claimed that Christ was the “*lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8).

Every appointed public house of God in the Old Testament was characterized by the divine pattern of sacrificial offerings described in the book of Leviticus.

These sacrificial offerings were a “shadow” or type of what they pictured, which is the redemptive Person and work of Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:1-4).

Indeed, since the very first appointed place of worship found in the book of Genesis, the sacrifice was the central aspect of public worship and that sacrifice was the antitype of the coming Person and work of Jesus Christ:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the

Essential Worship

Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. – Rev. 13:8

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. – Jn. 1:29

This sacrificial system from the very beginning in Genesis 3-4 was designed to picture and predict the coming of Christ and His redemptive work on the cross and was understood as such by all the prophets including the first prophet (Abel – Mt. 23:23).

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. – Gen. 3:15

He is the promised seed of the woman who would come through the line of Abraham (Gal. 3:8) that all the prophets preached:

“To him give all the prophets witness that whosoever believeth in his name shall receive remission of sins” – Acts 10:43

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. – Heb. 4:2

In regard to the public appointed house of worship, it was always divinely accredited by immersion in the Shekinah glory of God and fire sent from heaven to consume the sacrifice upon the altar. It was from that fire originating from God upon the altar that the priests took in their censors to light the candlesticks and altar of incense. It is the blood from that sacrifice that was sprinkled upon every item within that public house of God. Hence, the appointed

Essential Worship

sacrifice was the basis for all acts of worship conducted in the public house of God.

This is equally true of the New Testament “*church of the Living God, the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15). It is the redemptive work of Christ that characterizes every aspect of its public worship (1 Tim. 3:16). The only public ministry qualified to serve in the New Testament house of God are those who embrace and preach the truth of the gospel, as all other are “accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9). The ordinances administered in the public house of God must be characterized by the truth of the gospel. The membership must be characterized by the truth of the gospel (Mt. 16:16-18; 1 Pet. 2:5).

The appointed sacrifice in public worship is the sacrifice that gives witness to righteousness obtained solely by faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. All prayer, all praise, all ordinances, all giving, all preaching must be consistent with this central and basic truth. This truth is essential to both personal and public worship. No worship is acceptable without this truth being the conscious basis for entering into worship.

Wherever this central truth of the gospel of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, without works is denied or perverted, worship ceases to be acceptable unto God.

All public worship that originates with churches or denominations that denies and/or repudiates this truth either by their doctrine or worship practices are to be regarded as “accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9) by true believers and their worship is void and vain.

The denial of this gospel truth is manifested by the denial of eternal security of true believers in Christ (Jn. 6:38-39; 1 Jn. 5:6-13). Why? Because you cannot lose by works what cannot be

Essential Worship

gained by works. Those who repudiate eternal security of the true born again child of God are declaring that final justification is ultimately determined by their own good works either by outweighing bad works or by all bad works being confessed, forsaken and forgiven before death.

Those who believe you can will yourself into salvation and will yourself out of salvation believe in works for salvation. Saving faith is not an attribute of fallen man. Jesus said “*no man can come unto me except the Father draw him.*” If saving faith was a natural attribute of man then all men could come to Christ. Saving faith is the work of God (Jn. 6:29) and only those given to Christ by the Father can come in faith to Christ (Jn. 6:37-39). Saving faith is a “*gift of God and not of yourselves*” (Eph. 2:8).

The works of faith are not the same as faith in Christ. The works of faith (faithfulness) are the fruits of faith whereas justifying faith is the fruit of the Spirit. James refers to the manifest fruits of faith that are visible to men. James is refuting the idea that one can be justified by faith, but be completely without any fruits of faith as in the case of demons or in the case of one who never helps others, but merely professes to be justified by faith. The fruits of faith do not save anyone but are merely the manifestation of justification by faith before men. In the eyes of men professed faith without fruits is a dead faith or like a body without the spirit.

This dead faith belongs to the “tares” in Matthew 13 or false professors. This dead faith belongs to those who profess salvation and then turn against Christ and repudiate their profession (1 Jn. 2:19).

Essential Worship

All churches and denominations who deny eternal security of the true born again child of God are anti-Christ in doctrine.¹⁶ Their public worship is unacceptable to God as it robs God of the very manifest essence of His glory, and should be regarded as “accursed” by those who know the truth.

¹⁶ Ignorance of eternal security should not be regarded as repudiation of eternal security. All true believers need to be taught. Ignorance of the Trinity should not be construed as repudiation of the Trinity.

Essential Worship

CHAPTER FIVE

The Way of Cain

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.— Jude 11

What is “*the way of Cain*”? It is mentioned with two other Old Testament men (“*the error of Balaam*” and “*the gainsaying of Core*”). Balaam and Korah attacked and tried to pervert God’s pattern of worship or what the Old Testament refers to as “*the way of the Lord.*”

For example, Balaam attacked God’s pattern of worship in Israel by introducing idolatry through fornication among them. Korah attempted to usurp and overthrow God’s pattern of the priesthood in the worship of God. God had established a precise order among the Levities according to a divine pattern with Aaron and his sons at the top of that order. Korah attempted to overthrow that order.

The “*way of Cain*” is obviously in opposition to “*the way of the Lord*” (Gen. 6:12 “*had corrupted his way upon the earth*”) or else Jude would not command his readers “*learn not*” that way. “*The way of Cain*” is grouped with Balaam and Korah because he too attacked and tried to pervert God’s way or pattern of worship. The way of Balaam is defined within the context of Genesis 3-6 with special emphasis on Genesis 4:3-16.

*And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.
And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:*

Essential Worship

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. – Gen.. 4:3-

Essential Worship

In order to understand “*the way of Cain*” there are some basic questions the reader should ask about the worship account provided in Genesis 4:3-16

1. Where did Cain and Abel get the idea to offer a sacrifice?
2. What is the meaning of “well” and “accepted” in verse 5?
3. What is the manifest difference between the worship of Abel? versus the worship of Cain?
4. Why did Cain kill Abel when it was God, rather than Abel that rejected his sacrifice?
5. How could Cain “*go out from the presence*” of an omnipresent God (Gen. 4:16)?
6. What was the spiritual condition of Cain and Abel?

A. The Way of the Lord

In response to the first question, it is should be obvious either they were made aware of this manner of worship by their parents instructions and practice, or directly by God, or both.

For example, when Adam and Eve sinned, their conscience exposed their spiritual and physical nakedness in their own eyes, and before God, which they tried to conceal by fig leaves, and by hiding in the garden. God found, confronted and exposed their sin. God preached the gospel unto them (Genesis 3:15) about the good news of promised “*seed of the woman*” (virgin birth of Christ) who would be hurt by Satan (“*bruise his heel*”) but in the end the promised seed would destroy Satan (“*bruise thy head*”). This was

Essential Worship

followed by God providing skins of animals to cover their shame (Gen. 3:22). Obviously, the skins for their “*coats*” required the death of the animals.

New Testament prophets describe Jesus Christ as “*the lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8) and “*the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*” (Jn. 1:29). Genesis 1-4 would be included in the time frame “*from the foundation of the world.*”

In addition to this obvious typology applied directly to Christ as “*the lamb slain*” Jesus Christ identified Abel as the very first prophet of God.

That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. – Lk. 11:50-51

Peter also claims that “*all the prophets*” preached the very same gospel for remission of sins:

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. – Acts 10:43

God preached this same gospel to their parents, and then illustrated it in type by shedding the blood of lambs to provide “*coats*” to cover their physical nakedness, which also were types of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ by the shedding of his own blood. Cain and Abel learned about the sacrifice of a lamb as a blood atonement as the center piece of God’s pattern of public

Essential Worship

worship through their parents who received it directly from God, just as they learned about the time and place where public worship was to be offered.

B. The Way of Cain is the Way of Disobedience

This brings us to the second question with regard to the application of the terms “*well*” and “*accepted*” in Genesis 4:5. God “*accepted*” the sacrifice of Abel because Abel did “*well*” in the sight of God by observing the pattern established by God for worship. God is the law giver who from the beginning established what it is to do “*well*” and what it is not to do well (Gen. 2:13). You did “*well*” if you obeyed the Lord’s **revealed will**, but you did not do well if you disobeyed God’s revealed will. Abel obeyed God and thus did “*well*” and both he and his sacrifice were “*respected*” by God, while Cain did not do “*well*” but disobeyed God’s revealed will and that is why both he and his sacrifice were not respected by God.

C. The Way of Cain is the Way of Bloodless Worship

This brings us to the third question. What is the manifest difference between the worship of Abel and the worship of Cain? It is neither the place nor the time, nor is it the proper object of worship of the one true God. The only manifest difference is the kind of sacrifice being offered. Abel offered up what represented the life and death of a lamb, the “*firstling*” of his flocks. There is no question that this particular offering continued to represent the proper sin offering throughout the remainder of the scriptures right up to Christ being offered up on the cross. It is the preeminent sacrifice to represent the gospel of Christ.

Essential Worship

In direct contrast, Cain offered up a bloodless sacrifice from the “*fruit of the ground*” as the occupation of Cain was that of a farmer. Significantly, this is the only food offering found in the book of Genesis. The consistent Genesis pattern among the people of God is the animal sacrifice. Under the Mosaic ceremonial laws, a food offering would have been acceptable if it had followed a sin offering. Without the shedding of blood man cannot approach God, as there is no remission of sin apart from the shedding of blood. Hence, the ceremonial type of Christ’s sacrifice was indispensable in the Old Testament form of worship. The sin offering was the necessary prerequisite as a type to make a food offering acceptable. The sin offering typified the basis of atonement while the food offering typified the righteousness of the offerer based upon the atonement. To offer a food offering without a sin offering would be a ceremonial declaration of your own righteousness apart from Christ, and thus a rejection of the substitutionary atonement of Christ and declaration of justification by works. This innovation by Cain was the first declaration by ceremonial type of “*another gospel*” or the gospel of justification by works based ultimately upon the life of Cain, rather than the life of Christ. Hence, the way of Cain is the perversion of the worship of God at the very heart and essence of that worship – denial of the substitutionary atonement of Christ.

D. The Way of Cain is the way of Religious Persecution

This brings us to our fourth question. Why did Cain kill Abel when it was God that rejected the sacrifice of Cain?

*And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:
But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And
Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the
LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is*

Essential Worship

thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. – Gen. 4:4-7

How did God make known that He respected the one and not the other? The text does not say. However, **many** believe God showed his respect in the same manner as he did when Moses and Solomon offered up the first offerings in the dedication of the tabernacle and temple by consuming the sacrifice by fire from heaven.

Cain was visibly upset and angry because God rejected his offering - “*Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell.*”

However, Cain had no right to be angry, for the fault was with him and his offering. God directly confronted Cain and laid the blame at his own door. “*if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.*” The Hebrew term translated “*lieth*” is descriptive of a crouching beast waiting to spring and devour. Not only did his rejection originate with his own sin, but with willful sin. Both Cain and Abel were sinners by nature, and the law of sin indwelt them both. However, willful sin is much more grievous, as willful sin unleashes the beast within that can ultimately destroy us.

The real root of his willful sin is manifested in the words “*And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*”

The language infers a root of fear that promoted jealousy within Cain in regard to Abel. Cain was next in line to Adam as the apparent heir or firstborn to rule over the world (Gen. 1:26). By this time Adam and Eve had multiple younger siblings (Gen. 5:4

Essential Worship

“sons and daughters”).¹⁷ His firstborn position was not in jeopardy as long as he did “*well*” or obeyed the Lord. It would require some humility by the elder son to procure the proper sacrifice, as he was a farmer, and Abel was the shepherd. He would have to procure it from his younger brother the shepherd. This fear and root of jealousy had now come to its head by God showing respect unto Abel and his offering over Cain and his offering.

Cain had been rebuked and told that in order for him and his worship to be “*accepted*” he would have to do what he knew was regarded as “*well*” with God. He would have to swallow his pride and go to his younger brother Abel and secure the proper sacrifice provision – a lamb. Perhaps this explains why after this rebuke that Moses says “*And Cain talked with Abel his brother...*” (Gen. 4:17a).

The jealousy rooted in fear and pride was too great, and the unleashed beast within Cain resulted in the death of Abel and rejection of “*the way of the Lord*” or God’s pattern of salvation.

Religious persecution of the just is the way of Cain (Lk. 11:50-51; Rev. 17:5).

E. The Way of Cain is the Way of Apostasy

This brings us to the fifth question. Moses says that “*he went out from the presence of the Lord*” (Gen. 4:16). How can Cain leave

¹⁷ Genesis 5 is a listing of firstborn sons. The firstborn was not necessarily the first male child born but referred to the position of rightful heir. This is seen in the fact that Seth takes the position of firstborn while Cain who was actually the first male child born was still alive. This proves that Cain’s position as firstborn had been taken from him and given to Seth.

Essential Worship

the presence of an omnipresent God? David denied that he could go any place that would be outside the presence of God (Psa. 139). Hence, the text must refer to the appointed place of worship where God routinely met with the worshippers in their act of public worship. From this point forward the public appointed place where a public altar exists to worship God is called “the house of God.” When Abraham built a public altar for worship he called it “Bethel” or the “house of God” (Gen.12:8). When Jacob built an altar for worship, it was at Bethel, which means “*the house of God*” (Gen. 35:1). The finality of this statement “*he went out from the presence of the Lord*” and dwelt in the land of Nod was an act of complete apostasy from “*the house of God*” and thus a complete apostasy from “*the way of the Lord.*”

Cain departed and produced a family line of his own (Gen. 4:18-24) which kept its own distinct and separate family line of firstborn sons in distinction from the firstborn family line of Adam through Seth (Gen. 4:25-5:32). This separation lasted until intermarriage occurred between them in Genesis 6:1-5. That intermarriage with those who followed “*the way of Cain*” resulted in a universal wickedness and apostasy from “*the way of the Lord*” by the whole human race which ended in the destruction of the world:

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. – Gen. 6:13

This initial separation by God’s people from professing people of God who pervert “*his way*” (Gen. 4:18-5:32) has been the continued command after the flood which finds its clearest teaching in the ceremonial laws of Moses, and is still expressed in the teachings of the apostle Paul:

Essential Worship

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, - 2 Cor. 6:17

The revealed will of God is still that believers should marry only believers.

*The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, **she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.** 1 Cor. 7:39*

This brings us to the sixth and final question. What was the spiritual condition of Cain and Abel? We have inspired men to instruct us in this matter?

*Not as Cain, **who was of that wicked one,** and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. – 1 Jn. 3:12*

The Bible says that Cain “*was of that wicked one.*” Jesus sheds more light on the meaning “*of that*” wicked one:

*Ye are **of your father** the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. **He was a murderer from the beginning,** and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in*

Essential Worship

him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. – Jn. 8:44

Notice that both John and Jesus are characterizing false religionists. The doctrine of a person may indicate the spiritual condition of that person or at minimum indicates demonic influence.

If Cain was “*of that wicked one*” meaning he was “*of your father the devil*” then Abel was of God and his spiritual Father was God. In regard to Abel the writer of Hebrews says:

***By faith** Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, **by which he obtained witness that he was righteous**, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. – Heb. 11:4*

The sacrifice by Abel “*obtained witness that he was righteous.*” He never offered it to obtain righteousness but a witness that he was already righteous “*by faith.*” The same is seen in Abraham who was justified (imputed righteousness and remission of sins – Rom. 4:5-8) before he submitted to a divine ordinance (Rom. 4:9-11). Baptism is such a witness as an external type of salvation (1 Pet. 3:21 “*the like figure*” of an already “*good conscience*”).

“*Learn not the way of Cain*” as those who follow this way are following the doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1) which may indicate at worst they are lost religious people and at best deceived believers who need to “*come out*” of that kind of public worship (Rev. 18:4). “*The way of Cain*” eventually produced the first organized institutional religious rebellion against God at the tower of Babel which continued among all nations as “*Mystery Babylon*” or the “*the Great Whore*” – polluted public religion and worship.

Essential Worship

The way of Cain dominated much of the religious worship of Israel¹⁸ even in the time of Christ (Lk. 11:50-51).

Conclusion

The way of the Lord is defined by a divine pattern revealed in Scripture. Acceptable public worship has an appointed time, an appointed place and an appointed sacrifice. It has an appointed and qualified public ministry. It has qualified public ordinances.

The Way of Cain is a religious way of apostasy from that divine pattern. Professed houses of God that preach “*another Jesus*” or “*another gospel*” or “*another spirit*” or administer ordinances to the lost or populate their membership with unregenerate persons are at best counterfeit houses of God and at worst, synagogues of Satan or “high places” offering up “strange fire.” Such are the “way of Cain.”

Many sincere and truly saved persons attend these “high places” or counterfeit houses of God. However, when they participate in these public misrepresentations of worship, their public worship is vain and void in the sight of God.

¹⁸ After the death of Solomon, the children of God often followed “*the way of Cain*” as in the case of Jeroboam who introduced another pattern of worship into Israel in order to maintain his rule over the ten tribes.

Essential Worship

CHAPTER SIX Strange Fire

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.- Lev. 10:1

In Leviticus chapter nine God had provided fire straight from heaven to kindle the wood on the brazen altar:

And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces. – Lev. 9:24

This fire from heaven occurred just once during the initial divine authentication of every new “*house of God*.” When Solomon had finished the temple, which replaced the tabernacle, we read:

Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. – 2 Chron. 7:1

The fire that the Lord initially kindled was to be perpetuated by a Biblical qualified ministry.

And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings. The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out. – Lev. 6:12-13

Essential Worship

It was from this fire initially kindled by the Lord and perpetuated by an appointed and qualified ministry that was the only source for fire to be used in the censers of the Priests ministering in the house of God. When a plague came upon the children of Israel, Moses told them to take fire from the altar to light their censer:

And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun. – Lev. 16:46

“*Strange fire*” was fire originating from some other source than that which God provided at the brazen altar which was to be perpetuated (kept burning) by a properly qualified and ordained ministry. Only this fire from that source was to be used in the censers of the Priest in God’s House. Only that fire was to be used to light the candlesticks. Only that fire was used for the altar of incense. Only that fire was to be taken into the holy of holies once a year in the censor of the High Priest. Any other fire from any other source was “*strange*” fire. Therefore, the fire originating from God at the brazen altar permeated all major aspects of the entire “*house of God.*”

The Hebrew term “*zuwr*” translated “*strange*” has the meaning of “strange, alien, another, foreign” etc. Abihu and Nadab had apparently obtained the fire for their censers from a “strange, another, alien, foreign” source that God had not provided for use in His house.

Hence, “*strange fire*” at minimum identifies with acts of worship that do not originate with God or with his authorized pattern of worship.

Essential Worship

I. The Extended Symbolism

A. Identification with the symbolism of the gospel:

The direct object of this divine fire from heaven was the sacrifice placed upon the sacrificial altar (Lev. 9:24; 2 Chron. 7:1). Only an altar and sacrifice that conformed to the divine pattern was sanctified by this divine fire from heaven. There were precise specifications for both the altar and the sacrifice to be offered upon that altar. Fire from heaven was the manifest approval by God that such specifications were in keeping with the divine pattern.

In the Old Testament Scriptures, the brazen altar and the sacrifice were the clearest ceremonial type of the redemptive Person and work of Jesus Christ. The fire from heaven in connection with the brazen altar symbolized the wrath of God, while the sacrificial lamb symbolized the sinless life of Jesus Christ offered up in death to satisfy both the righteousness demanded by the Law to justify eternal life, and satisfaction of the penalty of the Law against sin.

This divine fire lit the wood upon the altar and the priests were never to allow that fire to die out. Moreover, this fire alone was used to light the censors, candlesticks and altar of incense. Thus that fire permeated the whole house of God from the outer court to the holy of holies. Hence, that fire identified with the whole divine pattern for public worship.

The fire originated from God, and thus not only identified with his whole authorized pattern for public worship, but symbolized the presence of God throughout this pattern of worship. Therefore, the “fire” and the whole pattern of worship together symbolized the essence of true worship “*in spirit*” (fire) and “*in truth*” (the

Essential Worship

divine pattern), thus making the “*house of God, the pillar and the ground of the truth.*”

B. Identification with the Divine Pattern for Public Worship

Just as “*strange fire*” identifies with deviations from the authorized pattern for worship and the source of these deviations (demons – 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:1), so the fire from heaven identifies with the divine pattern for worship and its source (God).

There is no question the words “*house of God*” in the Jewish mind immediately calls to mind the divine pattern provided by God as the basis for authorized and approved public worship:

According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it. – Ex. 25:9

That pattern included more than a qualified altar and sacrifice, but a qualified ministry, as well as, qualified ordinances. Fire from heaven manifested that not only the sacrificial altar was approved by God, but the whole system of public worship known as “*the house of God*” was approved and authorized by God.

Indeed, the whole house of God was merely an extension of the symbolism found in the brazen altar, sacrifice, with the application of fire and blood. From the very beginning the altar and sacrificial worship (Gen. 4:2-16) were the essence of this extended pattern provided by God as seen in the “*house of God*” built by Moses, then by Solomon and finally by Christ. Every house of God is built after the divine pattern.

1. The Tabernacle – Ex. 25:9, 40; Numb. 8:4; Josh. 22:28; Heb.

Essential Worship

8:5

2. The Temple – 1 Chron. 28:11-12, 18-19
3. The Church – Mt. 16:18; 28:19-20; Acts 2:40-41

There are seven consistent characteristics of this divine pattern that characterize every house of God found in the scriptures:

1. Public qualified builder

- a. The Tabernacle – Moses
- b. The Temple – Solomon
- c. The Church – Christ

2. Public Qualified Sacrifices

- a. The Tabernacle – Lev. 1-8
- b. The Temple – Lev.1-8
- c. The Church – Heb. 13:15-20

3. Public Qualified Ministry

- a. The Tabernacle – Levite Priesthood
- b. The Temple – Levite Priesthood
- c. The Church – Acts 1:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13; Acts 6

4. Public Qualified ordinances

- a. The Tabernacle- Leviticus
- b. The Temple - Leviticus
- c. The Church – Lk. 7:29-30; Mt. 26:12-30; 1 Cor. 5, 10, 11

5. Public Authorized system of faith

- a. The Tabernacle – Deut. 12
- b. The Temple – Deut 12
- c. The Church – Mt. 18:17-18; 28:18-20; Acts 2:1-3, 41

6. Public Accreditation by fire and immersion in the Shekinah glory of God

Essential Worship

- a. The Tabernacle – Ex. 40:36-37
- b. The Temple – 2 Chron. 7:1-3
- c. The Church – Acts 2:1-3

7. Public Confirmation of Perpetuity

- a. The Tabernacle – Lev. 6:12-13
- b. The Temple – 2 Chron. 7:1 with Lev. 6:12-13
- c. The Church – Mt. 16:18; 28:20; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:

It is this qualified “*pattern*” that makes the house of God “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*” Departure from this qualified “*pattern*” is apostasy and unacceptable public worship.

C. Identification with the New Testament Church

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. – Acts 2:3

Remember, this fire from heaven is identified with the whole system of public worship built after this seven fold “*pattern.*” This is why the New Testament church is specifically called “*the house of God.*”

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. – Tim. 3:16

Essential Worship

The fire from heaven identified with the truth provided in the symbolism of the altar and its sacrifice, and the fire from off that altar and the blood from that sacrifice was applied to the whole house of God. Just so, the truth of the gospel characterizes every aspect of the New Testament “*house of God*.” Its mission begins with the gospel (Mk. 16:15). Its membership is made up of only those who first profess the truth of the Gospel (Mt. 16:16-18). Its ministers must embrace the truth of the gospel (Gal. 1:8-9). Its ordinances are symbolic of the truth of the gospel. Every aspect of the congregation, its doctrine and practice is all consistent with the truth of the gospel.

1 Timothy 3:15 was written by Paul who was a Jew raised up under the teachings of the Old Testament scriptures. 1 Timothy 3:15 was written to Timothy who was the son and grandson of Jewish women who raised him up under the teachings of the Old Testament scriptures (2 Tim. 2:13-14).

In the Old Testament scriptures the words “*the house of God*” are found 83 times and all other synonymous phrases (“the Lord’s house”, “God’s House, etc.) several hundred times. This same phrase is used only three times in the New Testament previous to 1 Timothy 3:15 (Mt. 12:4; Mk. 2:26; Lk. 6:4).

Therefore, when the Jewish Paul wrote to the Jewish raised Timothy and identified the church as “*the house of God*”, the Jewish mind would instantly identify the church with the divine characteristics of the pattern provided by God.

1. Public qualified builder
2. Public qualified sacrifices
3. Public qualified Ministry
4. Public qualified ordinances
5. Public qualified system of faith

Essential Worship

6. Public qualified accreditation
7. Public qualified promise of perpetuity

For example, in its very context, 1 Tim. 3:15 is in connection with a qualified public ministry (1 Tim. 3:1-13). It is also in context with a qualified Christ centered system of faith (1 Tim. 3:16-4:1). The building pattern for churches is outlined in Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 2:40-41. The pattern for the ordinances is outlined in Luke 7:29-30 with Matthew 3 and Matthew 26:12-30 with 1 Cor. 5, 10, 11. The Authority is found in Matthew 18:17-18; and 28:18. The public accreditation is found in Acts 2:1-3. The Perpetuity is found in Matthew 16:18 with Matthew 28:20 and Ephesians 3:21.

Therefore, just as “*strange fire*” is identified with a perversion of this divine pattern for public worship, so the “*fire*” from God (Acts 2:3) identifies with the divine pattern for public worship.

C. Authentication of Divine Authority

God sent fire from heaven to signify His authorized approval of a house of worship or the place where his name (authority) dwelt.

But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: - Deut. 12:5

Remember, that Abihu and Nadab, had self-originated, and self-authenticated, and self-authorized their own fire, thus departing from and rejecting the fire provided by God on the brazen altar. Thus they departed from the authorized Biblical pattern for public worship.

Essential Worship

They had no authority from God to deviate from His authorized established pattern of worship. They had no authority to self-originate, self-authenticate and self-perpetuate their new pattern of worship. Strange fire has its origin, pattern and authority in self rather than in God.

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow. – Isa. 50:11

The tabernacle had been built according to a divine pattern. The temple had been built according to a divine pattern. The New Testament “house of God” – the church – (1 Tim. 3:15) had been built according to a precise divine pattern (Mt. 16:18; 28:18-20; Acts 2:40-41) along with all of its ordinances (Lk. 7:29-30; Mt. 26:12-30; 1 Cor. 5, 10, 11) and ministry (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13; Acts 6).

What Nadab and Abihu attempted to do internally to the “*house of God*,” is exactly what Paul predicts men would do to the New Testament “*house of God*”:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. – Acts 20:29-30

Internally, the attempt to introduce “*strange fire*” can be seen in the church at Corinth and other New Testament congregations.

Essential Worship

Indeed, early in the book of first Corinthians, Paul claimed they were fellowshiping with demons when they attended houses of idolatrous worship to purchase meat offered to idols:

*But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, **they sacrifice to devils**, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have **fellowship with devils**. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and **the cup of devils**: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the **table of devils**. – 1 Cor. 10:20-21*

They had polluted the Lord's table in so much that Paul denied it could even be called "*The Lord's Supper*" (1 Cor. 11:20). Some had denied the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the saints, thus directly repudiating the gospel of Christ. Strange fire was in their midst.

When the leadership of the Holy Spirit is followed then all aspects of public worship will surrender to the Lordship of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3). Worship "*in spirit*" always results in worship "*in truth*" as God the Spirit is not the author of confusion. When Paul said "*no man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit*" he was not speaking about mere verbalization of the words, but the actual meaning of those words in practical terms of recognition of His Lordship through submission to His revealed will. You can pay any drunk to say "*Jesus is Lord*" but these are empty words without any practical application, as they come out of his mouth. Only those under the leadership of the Spirit can say these words in the true sense of their meaning, because His leadership is always manifested in practical obedience to Christ as "*Lord*."

Likewise, to say "*Jesus is accursed*" is not speaking of mere verbalization of those words (although it certainly includes that), but he is referring to what those words mean in practical terms of

Essential Worship

worship. Worship under the leadership of the Holy Spirit will be submissive to the revealed will of the Lord which worship is characterized as “*in spirit*” and “*in truth*.” Worship that is defiant to the revealed will of the Lord is calling Christ “*accursed*” in the most practical sense as it makes Him the author of confusion. The worship at Corinth was in rebellion to the Spirit of God, and thus repudiated the Lordship of Christ, as it was characterized by false doctrine and practice which had its source in demons (1 Tim. 4:1). Such a practice makes Jesus “*accursed*” when it is performed in His name.

D. Strange Fire and “another Gospel”

“*Strange fire*” identifies with deviations from God’s revealed pattern for worship. Those who preach “*another gospel*” identify with “*another spirit*” as the source of their ministry, and thus the gospel they preach is “*strange fire*.” The Bible knows of only two contrasting ways (Mt. 7:13-14) or two contrasting gospels (Gal. 1:6-9). There is the true gospel of Jesus Christ that is consistently characterized in Scripture as the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone without works (Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 3:24-5:2; Gal. 1:6-9; 3:10-11) as opposed to the gospel of ultimate justification by faith plus works or “another gospel” (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:4; Mt. 7:22-23). The false gospel of justification ultimately by works necessarily demands the possibility of loss of salvation by true believers. The acid test between the true and false gospel is the doctrine of eternal security of true believers. All persons, ministries, churches and denominations that assert true born again children of God can be lost, are calling Jesus Christ a liar:

Essential Worship

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. – Jn. 6:39

In context “*the Father's will*” has nothing to do with the believer, but with personal obedience by the Son of God to the revealed purpose for which the Father sent him to earth. The Father sent the Son for the expressed purpose that “of all” the Father had given him, that he would “*lose nothing*.” To lose even one “of all” the Father gave him would be disobedience on the part of the Son. All worship grounded in the belief that the Son will violate the Father's will is “*strange fire*” as it makes Christ a sinner and repudiates the Word of God and thus preaches “*another Jesus*” and “*another gospel*” under the leadership of “*another spirit*” which is “*strange fire*.”

To teach that true children of God can ultimately go to hell is not only calling Christ a liar (Jn. 6:37-40) but it is the rejection of the substitutionary satisfactory redemptive work of Christ. Either Christ satisfied the penalty of sin for us, or He did not. Either Christ satisfied the righteousness demanded for us, or He did not. Those who preach “*another gospel*” (Gal. 1:8-9) deny these truths and thus deny the essence of the brazen altar and the essentials for acceptable worship.

All aspects of true worship must have their basis in the true Person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul meant when he said:

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. – 1 Cor. 2:2

This also means that the Person of Christ and His redemptive work is central and preeminent behind all true worship:

Essential Worship

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. – Eph. 3:21

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. – Col. 3:17

E. Strange fire and “another spirit”

God is not the author of “*strange fire*.” Strange fire originates with “*another spirit*” the “*spirit of error*.”

A good example of “*another spirit*” is found in the worship service at Corinth. Paul warned them about “*another Jesus*” and “*another gospel*” and “*another spirit*” in their midst (2 Cor. 11:4) all of which is symbolized by “*strange fire*.”

Indeed, early in the book of first Corinthians, Paul claimed they were fellowshiping with demons when they attended houses of idolatrous worship to purchase meat offered to idols:

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils. – 1 Cor. 10:20-21

They had polluted the Lord’s table, in so much, that Paul denied it could even be called “*The Lord’s Supper*” (1 Cor. 11:20). Some had denied the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of

Essential Worship

the saints, thus directly repudiating the gospel of Christ. Strange fire was in their midst.

When he came to the subject of “*spiritual gifts*” he warned them against reverting back to their paganistic practices under the leadership of demons (1 Cor. 12:1-2). He clarified the difference of leadership between demons and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3-4).

Worship that is defiant to the Lord’s revealed will is calling Christ “*accursed*” in the most practical sense (1 Cor. 12:3). Their worship service was more comparable to their former pagan worship under the leadership of demons (1 Cor. 12:2). Strange fire was in their midst. When worship is under the leadership of the Spirit, then all aspects of public worship will surrender to the Lordship of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3).

Paul clearly states that “*God is not the author of confusion*” (1 Cor. 14:33) in regard to true public worship. However, confusion characterized their public worship at Corinth. Therefore, Paul was clearly stating the “*confusion*” that characterized their public worship in the church of Corinth had some other spiritual source than God – “*strange fire.*”

Strange fire breeds confusion and incomprehension corporately (1 Cor. 14:1-12) and individually (1 Cor. 14:13-18) rather than edification, understanding and unity in all aspects of public worship.

Strange fire breeds disorder (1 Cor. 14:23-27) and unseemly and indecent conduct in the name of spirituality (1 Cor. 14:28-29). Strange fire reverses the Biblical pattern of the sexes in the name of spirituality (1 Cor. 14:33-36).

Essential Worship

Strange fire makes the means for worship preeminent over the redemptive Person and work of the Son of God.

The prevalent “spirit of ecumenical confusion” is also strange fire. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit “*of truth*” and unity by the Spirit is by conformity to, instead of rebellion against truth. When Jesus Christ prayed for the unity of the saints He did so according to the basis of truth:

Sanctify them by thy word, thy word is truth – Jn. 17:17

The essence of “*strange fire*” is manifested when diametrically opposed churches and denominations join in worship based upon a common experience (tongues, slain in the spirit, etc.), and yet without any change of conflicting doctrine.

The theory of the universal invisible church is a doctrine that justifies *this spirit of ecumenical confusion* by claiming all true believers are members of one mystical invisible body, even though divided by doctrine and practice, and even though many may be excluded by churches as heretics (2 Thes. 3:6).

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow. – Isa. 50:11

II. The Counterfeits – “high places”

Abihu and Nadab introduced “*strange fire*” within the house of God in an attempt to pollute the divine pattern of worship internally. However, it was Jeroboam who worked from the inside

Essential Worship

to completely transform and pollute the divine pattern of worship. God called such perversions “*high places*.”

1 Kings 12:27 *If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.*

28 *Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

29 *And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.*

30 *And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.*

31 *And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.*

32 *And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.*

33 *So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.*

Jeroboam tried to replicate God’s pattern for public worship that eventually became more popular in Israel than the “*house of God*” at Jerusalem.” They became so popular in the time of Isaiah that

Essential Worship

even the enemies of God thought the “*high places*” represented God, as much as the temple in Jerusalem.

But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar? – Isa. 36:7

Jeroboam usurped God’s right to authorize and originate a public ministry by authorizing and originating a public ministry that perverted the pattern of God’s ministry in Jerusalem:

And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. – 1 Kings 12:31

So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. – 2 Kings 17:32

Jeroboam authorized and originated public sacrifices and feasts that perverted God’s pattern in Jerusalem:

1 Kings 12:32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

Essential Worship

Notice the repetitive theme that all of this was self-originated and self-authorized:

1 Kings 12:28 *Whereupon the king took counsel....29 He set.....31 And he made.....32 Jeroboam ordained.....So he did.....he had made.....he placed.....which he had made.....33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made.....which he devised of his own heart.....and he offered.....”*

Strange fire is the attempt to pollute the divine pattern of public worship either from the inside, or by an external complete counterfeit. Strange fire is self-authorized worship according to patterns and doctrines/traditions of men.

Paul predicted that there would be internal attempts to pollute the New Testament pattern of public worship:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. – Acts 20:28-30

The Apostle John described external counterfeit places of public worship under the metaphor of “harlots” (Rev. 17:5; 18:4) or polluted forms of institution worship, while the divine pattern of worship is described under the metaphor of a “chaste virgin” (2 Cor. 11:2) and/or “bride” (Rev. 19:6-7).

Essential Worship

Therefore, public worship “*in spirit and in truth*” has been established according to a divine pattern. It has an appointed time [The Lord’s Day], a public appointed place [The house of God], around a public appointed sacrifice [the gospel of Jesus Christ].

Strange fire represents several clear ideas. First, it is fire from another source than God and His authority. Second, it is worship that does not originate from, and characterize the brazen altar sacrifice, thus it represents worship characterized by “another gospel.” Third, it represents a whole system of worship that has deviated from the divine pattern of public worship. That divine pattern not only includes the basics of the Lord’s Day, the Lord’s House and the Lord’s sacrifice, but the pattern of membership, ministry and ordinances that characterize the Lord’s House. It includes departure from the essentials of personal worship. It is manifested in the five perverted forms of worship (will worship, idolatrous worship, vain worship, disorderly worship and ignorant worship).

III. Worship in High Places by God’s People

“*High places*” were polluted institutions for public worship. Today we have many such “*high places*” or false churches wherein God’s people may be found performing public worship unto God. However, this is not new. In the Old Testament true children of God were found among those who worshipped Jehovah in “high places”:

So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, *which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places*. – 2 Kings 17:32

Essential Worship

Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only. – 2 Chron. 33:17

In the New Testament there were those who professed to be followers of Christ who served God in such “high places” or perverted places of public worship: outside

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. – Rev. 18:4

The New Testament congregation is metaphorically described as a “chaste virgin” (2 Cor. 11:2). The metaphor of a “chaste virgin” refers to a congregation that conformed unto and was faithful to the divine pattern for public worship. Paul warned that such a metaphorical “*chaste virgin*” could be metaphorically “*corrupted*” (2 Cor. 11:3) departing from that divine pattern and embracing the strange fire of “*another gospel*” and “*another spirit*” and “*another Jesus*” (2 Cor. 11:4) through a perverted ministry (2 Cor. 11:5-11).

A metaphorically “corrupted” chaste virgin is a metaphorical “whore” or “harlot” or that which is not faithful to Christ. The Great Whore and her harlot daughters in Revelation 17-19:4 represent such public institutions of worship that have embraced “*strange fire*” and deviated from the divine pattern of worship or “*the faith once delivered*.”

Conclusion

At minimum, “*strange fire*” identifies exactly opposite with what the “*fire*” from heaven is identified with. “*Strange fire*” at minimum represents deviation (false doctrines and practices) from

Essential Worship

the divine pattern of worship. It represents another source and authority behind a deviate pattern of worship. “*High places*” are the institutional summation of “*strange fire*” as deviate pattern of public worship. “High places” are equal to public institutions of worship that have “*corrupted*” the divine pattern of worship, and thus metaphorical “*harlots*.”

Essential Worship

CHAPTER SEVEN

Praise

But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. – Psa. 22:3

Praise is an essential aspect of true worship. There are several Hebrew terms translated “praise” in the Old Testament. One such Hebrew term translated “praise” is *Yadaw* which means to give thanks. Yet another Hebrew term *hiluwl* means “to rejoice.” Another Hebrew term translated “praise” is “*barak*” which means “to bless.”

Moreover, the Hebrew term translated “praise” in Psalm 22:3 is *hillel* which is used in connection with hymns or psalms with musical instruments (Psa. 33:2; 81:2; etc.). Indeed the Hebrew title for the book of Psalms is *hillel*. The book of Psalms is the hymn book of the Old Testament which was written for worship services in the House of God with musical instruments. This is the term used by Paul in Ephesians 5:19 “*spiritual songs and hymns*”

The book of Psalms has many contributors. To Asaph are ascribed twelve Psalms; to the sons of Korah, eleven, including the eighty-eighth, which is also ascribed to Heman, that being the only instance in which the name of the "son" (or descendant) is mentioned; and to Ethan, one. Solomon's name appears before the seventy-second and hundred twenty-seventh; and that of Moses before the ninetieth.

Today, many believe that worship is to be primarily dominated by singing and music, and so, much of modern day worship services make music the predominate characteristic of their services instead of the preaching of God's Word. However, much

Essential Worship

of what is considered “praise” music today is nothing but catchy repetitious phrases set to music. These repetitious phrases set to music may emotionally work up the audience but they fail to compare with the divine hymns found in Scripture or measure up to David’s purpose for public worship.

The point made by David is that God is “holy”. The term “holy” means to be set apart. God is “set apart” from all His creation and creatures by his attributes, moral perfections, sovereign position, redemptive work and truth revealed in the Scriptures. The reason why God “inhabitest the praises of Israel” is because the hymn book of Israel is written to express this truth content about God. In other words, the Psalms provide truth content that conveys the truth about his attributes, moral perfections, sovereign position, and redemptive work as revealed in Scriptures. The Biblical worship praises are merely sermons with doctrinal content set to music.

God “*inhabitest the praises* (Heb. *hillel* = psalms) *of Israel*” because the Psalms are full of content that reveal his holiness in the form of practical truths. The Psalms are not repetitious phrases set to music, but lyrics that convey sound doctrine. The Psalms are a practical theology book of the Old Testament set to music.

Many scorn at the older “hymns” that arose in the 18th-20th century because they are so full of doctrinal content. However, that is the precise nature of the very music God designed for public worship in the house of God. This is what Paul refers to as, “*spiritual*...hymns” (Eph. 5:19). Paul uses the term “*spiritual*” in contrast to “*carnal*” or “*fleshly*” (2 Cor. 3:1-3). There are three clear distinctions between “*spiritual*” and “*carnal*” Christian music:

Essential Worship

1. Right Biblical Content – lyrics

This should be a no-brainer! Songs are merely sermons set to music! If the lyrics are unbiblical then the song is "*carnal*."

2. Right Biblical Balance between Music and Lyrics

Carnal songs are songs where the music dominates the lyrics, insomuch that you cannot hear or understand the message. That violates the Biblical principle of confusion - God is not the author of confusion.

Carnal songs are songs where the beat of the music not only dominates the lyrics but produces an imbalance in the listening audience, so that there is more of a physical than a spiritual response. In other words, the song is carnal when their bodies are dominated by the song so that the physical response is sexually suggestive and/or becomes the focal emphasis. Whenever the flesh dominates the spirit, which is the essence of carnality.

Why is there so much sexual perversion among some groups of Christians? The kind of music they use promotes carnality.

3. Right Biblical Distinction

The terms "spiritual" versus "carnal" refer to contrasting origins. Anything that erases the distinction between spiritual and carnal is carnal. When there is no discernible difference between "Christian" and "worldly" music, but the "Christian" sounds just like the "worldly" that is "carnal" Christian music. Some believe they can take worldly music, music that is imbalanced, music that is fleshly and simply give it Christian lyrics and that makes it spiritual

Essential Worship

music. Again, this violates the Biblical principle of confusion. Instead, God commands "come out from among them....and touch not the unclean...." rather than mixing God with the world. When your music appeals to the world, so that it is a drawing card, you know it is carnal, as the world hates the things of God. The world has no "spiritual" capacity and anything that appeals to them can only appeal to their flesh and that is the essence of carnality.

Spiritual songs have right Biblical content and a right Biblical balance between rhythm and lyrics that glorifies God and appeals and edifies the spirit of man without inducing the flesh to respond inappropriately before the presence of God and saints.

There is "*strange fire*" in the music used by many in public worship today. It is empty of doctrinal content and mere repetitious phrases set to music designed to excite the flesh rather than direct the mind to the glorious truths of God's Word.

The Bible tells us to give unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, but to God the things that belong to God. The Bible tells us to not love the things of the world or try to mix the world with the things of God, as there is no agreement between the things of God and the things of the world (2 Cor. 6:16-17). **God never directed the people of God at any time to take anything from the world or from pagan worship and "Christianize" it.** Instead, God commanded them to "*come out from among them....and touch not*" such things. Why? Because everything used in the worship of God has a divine origin and pattern, and so, God never needed to borrow or redeem worldly things for use in His worship.

When it came to building every aspect of the house of God, God commanded Moses to build everything after a heavenly pattern.

Essential Worship

According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it. – Ex. 25:9

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. – Heb. 8:5

Every article, every piece of furniture, every detail of the sacrifices, every aspect of the clothing and utensils of the priests (Ex. 25:40; Numb. 8:4; Josh. 22:8; 1 Chron. 28:11,12,18,19; and even the pattern of the hymns used in worship is provided by God in the book of Psalms wherein Moses was the first contributor.

When the Jewish Paul wrote Timothy (a Jewish raised man) and described the church of God as “*the house of God.....and pillar and ground of truth*” it conveyed only one thing to the mind of those raised under the Old Testament scriptures. It conveyed public worship designed after a heavenly pattern. It conveyed a public ministry that met specific divine qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-13). It conveyed a public sacrifice that emphasized the Person and redemptive work of the Son of God (1 Tim. 3:16-19). It conveyed a specific doctrine and practice not to be departed from (1 Tim. 4:1). It conveyed public ordinances that had a heavenly design and administration. It conveyed public worship that is authorized and followed the heavenly pattern set forth in the scriptures (Mt. 28:18-20).

Not everything called “*praise*” music glorifies God. Not all “*worship*” music is “*spiritual*” in its character. Much of what is called “*praise*” or “*worship*” music is repudiated by God as it violates the principles of true Biblical Worship.

Essential Worship

Conclusion

Not only must the content of the lyrics must reflect the truth of Scripture, but the content of your worship (preaching, ordinances, etc.) must harmonize with the content of your lyrics. As demonstrated in the introduction of this book, sincere praise is not sufficient alone to be accepted as true worship. David was a man that was said to be a man “*after God’s own heart.*” There was no lack of sincerity on the part of this man. However, David learned by experience that sincere heartfelt praise music was not the essence of true worship. Here is a description of his heartfelt sincere worship:

And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets. – 1 Chron. 13:8

Note the words “*with all their might.*” There was no lack of heartfelt sincerity. There was no lack of praise and instruments of praise.

However, their praise did not harmonize with their practice in the act of worship. God was so displeased with their worship practice that he killed one of these sincere participants. David learned that sincerity and praise are only acceptable to God if it is accompanied by obedience to His word:

For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. – 1 Chron. 15:13

Essential Worship

Notice that David did not blame the person God killed. He said “*ye*” and “*us*” and “*we*” sought him not “*after the due order*.”

David read the book of Leviticus and learned that worship must be “set apart” (holiness) by obedience to the revealed will of God:

For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that **we sought him not after the due order**. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, **as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD**. – 1 Chron. 15:13-15

God’s Word forbids anyone to carry the ark, but a certain family of the Levitical Priests. Sincerity and praise is unacceptable to God as true worship when it is in connection with open violation of God’s revealed will. David was sincerely wrong.

Essential Worship

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Lost Sense of Reverence

For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. – Isa. 66:2

The sense of reverence no longer can be found in many worship services. Church services are regarded more as a community club where coffee and donuts are served while they are entertained. Pastors come to the pulpit dressed in shorts or casual attire as though worship service was merely an attempt to make sinners comfortable in the presence of God.

Many have lost the sense that they are entering into the house “of God” and into the presence of the Creator of heaven and earth. However, would such a person even dream of coming this way into the White House if the President invited them? No, they give more honor and reverence to earthly kings than the King of kings.

Paul thought it was important to come and show Timothy how he was to act in the presence of God, in the “house of God, the church of the Living God.”

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. – 1 Tim. 3:15

Paul was speaking not merely about the congregation but the place where the congregation assembled for worship. The public worship service was not to be treated lightly or as something

Essential Worship

common but with the dignity and reverence due to the presence of the Almighty and Holy Creator.

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. – 1 Chron. 16:29

The “beauty of holiness” refers not merely to worship “set apart” by obedience to the scriptures in regard to how God is to be worshipped (in truth), but to the disposition of spirit required to worship a holy God (in spirit). The proper spirit in the presence of God is a “humble and contrite spirit” rather than an attitude seeking to make sinners at ease in Zion.

The Man of God should approach the pulpit in a spirit of reverence and the fear of God that drives him to utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit to say that which is acceptable and honoring to God in whose presence he stands. That means he must make prayerful preparations under the leadership of the Spirit before even approaching the pulpit.

The Song leader needs to realize the significance of his ministry. He needs to prayerfully seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit so that he chooses songs that not only offer proper content and tone that glorifies God but that will complement the preaching of God’s Word. The Song leader and Preacher need to be under the guidance of the same Spirit so that unity and harmony characterizes the worship service in all of its aspects.

Those who come to the public house of worship should prayerfully prepare themselves to enter into the presence of God. They need to be conscious that they are coming to meet God, not the preacher, and not their friends. They are not coming to put on

Essential Worship

a fashion show. They should be coming to seek God, to hear from God, to be blessed by God and be a blessing to others (Psa. 84).

The membership should come dressed in such a manner that their children recognize this is a very special time. They should dress their best for God and God's people. They should not come dressed like harlots or like beach bums. Your outer attire reveals your inner spirit.

Essential Worship

Questions Answered

QUESTION: When Christians assemble from all denominations to hear a speaker or musicians is that acceptable worship?

ANSWER: First, this assembly does not meet the Biblical prerequisites to be regarded as “*the house of God*” or to be a New Testament congregation. So God is regarding their worship on an individual level only. The individual’s gathered and performing are worshipping God as long as their hearts, words and actions are in keeping with the revealed will of God, and those hearts, words and actions are under the leadership of the Spirit of God. Therefore, a group of Christians diverse in doctrines and denominations can worship God, but that worship is regarded by God on an individual basis rather than as a church of Christ. For a group of Christians to worship God, as the public church instituted by Christ, they must conform to, and be unified in the divine pattern of such an institution. On essential is water immersion of professed believers in the true gospel unified by essential doctrine and practice, under a qualified ministry.

QUESTION: What about individual members who come to the Lord’s congregation for public worship but who are right with God, does their presence invalidate the worship by the assembly?

ANSWER: No, it simply invalidates their individual worship as acceptable to God.

Essential Worship

QUESTION: What would make worship by a true “House of God” unacceptable worship?

ANSWER: Whatever actions participated in by the whole assembly that violates the Word of God would be rejected as “acceptable” worship.

QUESTION: What would make the entire service unacceptable worship before God?

ANSWER: If the entire service violated the revealed Word of God then the entire service would be rejected as “acceptable” worship.

QUESTION: If a true child of God participates in a public assembly that you regard as a “high place” does that invalidate their worship unto God?

ANSWER: Only if any act of worship is in violation to the revealed word of God. God does not regard the assembly as His congregation and therefore, every individual participating in worship would be considered in whether their heart, words and actions conformed or did not conform to God’s Word. If their heart motive was right but their words and actions violated God’s Word, their worship would be unacceptable. David and all Israel is a prime example of right hearts but wrong actions in the case of bringing the ark upon a cart drawn by oxen.

QUESTION: If a true child of God participates in a true “house of God” for public worship and their words and actions

Essential Worship

are all in keeping with God's word but their heart is not in keeping with God's word does God accept their worship?

ANSWER: No! God looks upon the heart to judge their words and actions as acceptable or not acceptable. Sin begins with the wrong heart motive. If the heart motive is wrong everything that springs from that motive is regarded as sin in God's eyes, regardless how those words and actions appear unto men.

Summary

True worship is “*in spirit and in truth.*” With regard to worship “*in spirit*” both personal and public worship require the very same fundamentals – (1) Spiritual capacity (new birth); (2) Spiritual capability (Spirit led); (3) Spiritual character (Spirit filled).

With regard to worship “in truth” both personal and public worship require two fundamental truths – (1) The Truth of God; (2) The truth of salvation. In addition, all true public worship includes conformation to these same two truths in its constitutional make up, its ordained ministry, its ordinances, and its worship functions and mission. Observing such things in public worship is what defines “*acceptable*” service and is what glorifies God by Christ in the church.

No true worship is possible or acceptable that perverts or denies the truth of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, and in the person of Jesus Christ and his finished work, without works. At minimum, to worship “*in truth*” requires this essential. The doctrine of eternal security of true believers is the manifest evidence that a person or church embraces both of these essential truths.

Essential Worship

Personal worship occurs whenever a true child of God is being led by the Spirit. The Spirit always leads in whatever truth that has been revealed within the measure of personal growth in sanctification, especially the truth of the gospel. Such worship will be confined within the limitations of the truth of God's Word or else they are not being led by the Spirit of God. Any religious action that occurs outside of the boundaries of God's Word ceases to be true worship, regardless how it may appear or may profess to be. Acceptable personal service is occurring whenever the child of God is being led by the Spirit and that is worship.

However, in regard to the revealed designated means for "*acceptable*" public worship as "*the house of God*" or the New Testament congregation the Scriptures are very clear.

The authorized public "*house of God*" will be characterized by a divine pattern of worship. That pattern of worship includes a qualified ministry that administers qualified ordinances in keeping with the truth of the gospel. It membership will characterize such water immersed professors in the true gospel. At minimum, it will at least assemble on the qualified "*Lord's day*" or Sunday – Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10. It will not be a self-originated or self-authorized place of worship, but will originate after the pattern of the Great Commission, administered by a previous house of God of like faith and order. All other professed houses of God are "*high places*" whose worship is "*strange fire*" and who follow "*the way of Cain*" in perverting the divine pattern for public worship.