***The Doctrine of Worship

RV109-01***

We are studying Revelation 5:11-14. The scene which the apostle John is observing in the heavenly throne room reaches a climax with all the living creatures of God (every living kind of creature that God has made) joining together in praise of the Father and the Son, as we looked at in the previous session. This includes, as we saw, all the inhabitants of heaven itself in the form of angels and human beings, including the realm of the atmospheric heavens. That's why there are three heavens. There's the atmosphere above the earth. There is the interstellar spaces, which is the stomping ground of Satan and his demons. Then there is the throne room itself, the third heaven.

It also includes all the living people and the animals on the surface of the earth. It also includes all of the lost souls and the demons who are under the surface of the earth in the place called Hades. Furthermore, we were told that it includes all those upon the sea, as well as the marine life which is in the oceans. So, whatever God has ever created, whatever God put together that breathes the breath of life, is going to, at the end of the tribulation period, proclaim this final expression of adoration and praise for the living God.

All these created beings express adoration and praise for the Father and for the Son, calling attention to four qualities in the expression of their praise. First of all, blessing expresses praise, prosperity, and dedication to God. Honor is the highest esteem above all else in the universe. Glory is the recognition of the deity and the son and the prerogatives of sovereignty. And, finally, power, but we found that it was a different word from the one we had up in verse 12. This was not potential powers as that was, but this was omnipotent ability and action. This is power put in to use. This adoration of all the living beings that God has created is directed to God the Father on His throne and to His Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb. These four qualities are confidently attributed to Father and Son forever.

**The Four Living Creatures said, "Amen"**

Now we begin at Revelation 5:14, where we read, "And the four living creatures said, 'Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped." The Greek word for living creatures looks like this: "zoon." This refers to the four cherub type angels who are surrounding the Father's throne as an honor guard. The word "zoon" stresses the possession of life. They are directed by God. We saw when we studied these four living creatures earlier that they symbolize the qualities which are exercised by God and His government of His creation. His government follows the pattern of sovereign king; of servant; the expression of humanity; and, the expression of deity. This is particularly expressive, of course, of the Lord Jesus, who as the God-man, will so govern the millennial world, and we with Him, with these qualities. These are to be exemplified in Jesus Christ as the ruler of the whole earth.

These four living creatures "said," which is our old "lego," the word for communication which stresses the meaning of the words which are used. What the words mean is again being stressed to us here. This is in the Greek imperfect tense, which tells us that something is repeated again and again. So, repeatedly these four living creatures are saying something which we'll see in a moment. It is active voice which tells us that they themselves are making these statements.

What they are saying is "Amen." In the Greek Bible, it looks like this: "amen." This word actually comes, first of all, from the Hebrew word "amen." It was transliterated; that is Hebrew letter was changed into Greek letter. That's all – just letter-for-letter. It came out "amen." Then, from there, the Greek was taken and transliterated letter-for-letter for the English word "amen." So you have this strong connection between the Greek, the Hebrew, and the English. What it means is "so be it." It's an expression of confirmation.

In Deuteronomy 7:9 we have the significance of this word illustrated, where it is under the phrase "the faithful God: "Know, therefore, that the Lord your God, He is God, the 'amen' God;" the faithful God. This gives us a clue as to what the word "amen" means. He is the God who keeps His covenant and mercy with them who love Him and keep his commandments to 1,000 generations. And God will bless you and me for honoring and obeying His word, but it won't stop there. It will go on to our children, and to their children's children. And God says, "If you stand by Me, and your progeny stands by Me, and I'll stay with you to 1,000 generations of multiplied mounting blessing.

Isaiah 65:16 also uses the Hebrew word "amen:" "That he who blessed himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of 'amen,'" and here it is translated "the God of Truth:" "He that swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth." and so on. So, we have another connotation here that there is not only the idea of faithfulness when you say "amen;" that is that you are saying that something is faithfully true, but you are also indicating that it is indeed true. The Hebrew word connotes complete trustworthiness of something.

In the New Testament, this word, "amen," is often translated by the word "verily," which also conveys the idea that it's trustworthy. You can depend upon it. It is so used, for example, in 2 Corinthians 1:20 to declare the certainty of the fulfillment of all the promises of God: "For all the promises of God are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." If God promises to do something, it's an amen. It's a certainty. There's no question about it.

The living creatures here in Revelation 5:13 respond repeatedly to the angelic adoration that we have been studying, which we have heard resounding through that heavenly scene. They repeatedly respond by saying, "Amen, amen, amen:" "And the four living creatures said, 'Amen.'" That which they had heard in adoration of God, they thereby declare to be absolutely true and trustworthy.

**The Elders**

Then it says, "The 24 elders." The word "24" does not belong in there. It's not in the Greek text. It simply says, "And the elders." The elders is the word "presbuteros." The word "presbuteros" comes from a word that means "old man." Here it is referring to the 24 elders of revelation 4:4 in this context, who are seated on 24 throne surrounding the Father's throne. Therefore, the Greek Bible says, "*The* elders" because it's referring back to the specific ones in the context that he has just been referring to. The elders represent the universal church as the body of Christ after the rapture. The elders on earth were the spiritual leaders of the local churches – one to a church. These elders had fallen down in worship in Revelation 4:10, and again in Revelation 5:8. They're now standing, or they are back seated upon their thrones, in preparation for their final expression of worship here in Revelation 5:14.

We're told that these elders, representing the body of Christ following the rapture now in heaven, fell down. The word "fell down" is the Greek word "pipto." This means to prostrate oneself on the ground in the expression of subjection. It's in the aorist tense which means that it takes place at the point when they hear these four living creature shouting these "Amens." The elders actually do, from a standing position, prostrate themselves to the ground, falling down face to the ground, or else from their thrones. It is a true statement of fact. The circle of 24 elders around the Father's throne are all on their knees with their heads bowed before Him.

What are they doing? It says that in this act, they worship: "proskuneo." This is from two words. It comes from a preposition "pros," meaning "toward." And it comes from the verb "kuneo," which means "to kiss." So, literally, this says, "To kiss toward." What it's speaking of is an expression of reverence and submission. In the ancient Greek word "proskuneo" was used to describe the worship of the earth deities. And the way you worshiped your earth gods was by getting on the ground and kissing the ground. You kissed the earth as an expression of worshiping the deities of the earth. This word has come down to us in the Greek Bible as the most frequent word which is used to express worship. What it means is to bow down, or to make obeisance. The representatives of all of the Christian church, the 24 elders, are therefore seen as bowing down in total subjection to the God-man Jesus Christ. Genuine worship of Jesus Christ is an attitude of mind toward God's revelation of Himself in the Bible.

Let's put it right up front here. We're going to look at the doctrine of worship, and see if we can get a few things straight on an area in which there's more conflict than you might imagine. There are some people who do not look fondly upon Berean Church because of this concept of what constitutes the epitome of worship: personal; and, corporate.

Genuine worship, first of all, is an attitude toward what God has said about Himself. Apart from the knowledge of Bible doctrine, no worship of God is possible. Apart from the knowledge of the Word of God, no worship is possible. Worship, therefore, is not a matter of ritual. It is not something that you perform in human capacity. It is not some kind of a work system that you go through. It is not some kind of liturgy. It is not stained glass windows. It is not some hushed cathedral. It is not robes upon the minister or upon the choir. It is not great singing. It has nothing to do with any of those things which are generally associated with worship, and which give people the idea, therefore, that they cannot worship God unless there is some kind of ecclesiastical surrounding like that.

Many years ago, the man that was so influential in my life spiritually told me as a teenager a very perceptive biblical truth. He said, "The more externals you have in approaching God, the less you will have internally of the Spirit." The more accouterments you are surrounded with, in order to approach God: the liturgy; the singing; the robes; the stained glass window; and, the whole bit – the more you have on the outside, the less you will have internally in your communication and contact with God, because those things tend to digress us from what is true worship. True worship centers upon learning what God has revealed about Himself. Worship is a matter of prostrating ourselves: kneeling down before Him; putting our head to the ground; to approach Him; and, to be before Him in adoration and in reverence and in absolute subjection. That's what the position of prostrating oneself indicates. It is the expression of total submission to the authority of God.

Worship is joyfully acknowledging the supreme worthiness of God, and of all that He has said to us. That's what we have seen in this heavenly scene: the joyful acknowledgment with this tremendous "Amen" of the four living creatures (these four cherub type angels). This was the tremendous "Amen" to everything that they have heard in adoration and exaltation of God. The Triune God is indeed entitled to our maximum adoration, and our total subjection to His Word. We should prostrate ourselves in His presence.

Verse 14 says, "The angel shouted their 'Amen.' The elders fell down and worshiped." And that's where it stops. The last words: "Him that lives forever and ever do not belong at the end of verse 14. Somebody apparently picked them up from Revelation 4:10 where that expression is found, and fittingly included it there. When these men copied the old manuscripts of the Bible by hand, sometimes they would put out in the margins (something that was an expression of praise) that they had picked up earlier. Or as they would get the feel of what they were reading in the exaltation of worship in this particular passage, it was kind of easy to put out in the margins this expression: "Forever and ever. It's never going to end. This is the God that we will so honor forever. He is that trustworthy." Well, then the next person that came along copying that manuscript, very often, took what was in the margin and thought, "Oh, he made a mistake and forgot to put it in," and they slipped it into the verse. So, fortunately, we have enough manuscripts to let us know what is the correct original. This is not a very critical thing here, but the verse simply says, "The four living creatures said, 'Amen,' and the elders fell down and worshiped."

The whole expression of praise and worship that we have here is, of course, in anticipation of what we will now enter in the near future in chapter 6, where we get down to the pure tribulation era, and all of the terror that is about to come upon mankind.

**The Doctrine of Worship**

So, now we take up the doctrine of worship – some basic thoughts from the Word of God.

1. **To Bow Down**

First of all, the basic Old Testament word for "worship" is "shachah." It means "to bow down." It's an act of respect and of submission. On the one hand, it could be used of submission to human authority. Sometimes it is used in the Bible of the idea of a person bowing down to a human being. For example, Genesis 42:6 says, "And Joseph was the governor over the land, and it was he that sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down ('shachah') themselves before him with their faces to the earth." This is very clearly declaring the act of obeisance.

We may also illustrate this word in 1 Samuel 25:41, which says, speaking of Abigail, that David wanted to marry: "And she arose and bowed herself on her face to the earth ('shachah'), and said, 'Behold, let your handmade be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord," which was her poetical way of saying, "Yes. OK, David. I'll accept your proposal."

However, it is primarily used of a person expressing his subjection to God's authority. You have that used, for example, in Exodus 24:1, where it is used in that way: "He said unto Moses, 'Come up onto the Lord: you; Aaron; Nadab; Abihu; and, 70 of the elders of Israel, and worship afar off;'" that is bow down in worship before God at a distance.

We also have this word used in Job 1:20: "Job rose, and tore his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped God." When he got all the bad news, this godly man, instead of sitting around and whining, "Why me," in all the tragedies that were coming upon him, turned, and he bowed himself down in worship before the living God. What this word basically expresses in the Hebrew is adoration by man (the creature) to God (he Creator).

In the New Testament we've already found that the basic word is "proskuneo," the one which is used in our passage in Revelation 5:14. This means "to bow down" again, or "to prostrate oneself." It's an expression of reverence. It is also used toward human beings (certain important personalities) For example, in Matthew 2:2, the wise men are saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him;" that is, "We want to come and prostrate ourselves in reverence and adoration before Him.

We also have this word used in Acts 10:25: "And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him." Cornelius should not have done this, but here you have this act of prostrating and expressing worship before a human being.

Also, we have John sort of falling into this trap in Revelation 19:10. John says, "I fell at his feet (the feet of an angel) to worship him. And he said unto me, 'Do not do that. I am your fellow servant and your brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship (fall down) before God for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'" So, John was rebuked for doing this before an angel.

The New Testament indicates that the act of obeisance is to be reserved for deity. You only worship God. For example, Matthew 2:11: "And when they were come into the house, they (that is, the three Magi) saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshiped Him." They came in, and they worshiped the child Jesus.

Matthew 4:9 uses this New Testament idea of worship in terms of bowing down: "And said unto Him (this is Satan saying to Jesus), 'All these things (that is, control over the nations of the world – millennium without suffering) I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." The "fall down" is very clearly stated. Worshiping there was prostrating before the person of Satan in this case, and the Lord refused.

So, what this word demands is in fact a physical act. But we must remind you that this physical act requires a visible deity. When it is used in the New Testament, it is a physical, external act of bowing down, but it is only in the presence of an external physical deity. This was possible, of course, only while Jesus Christ was here on earth, and it will be possible when He returns. So, this is not a proper term for Christian worship today, when Jesus Christ is no longer physically present. But we may extend it in the spiritual sense that we do this in our hearts. We bow down in His presence in terms of our adoration internally of our minds toward Him.

Physically, this is not an acceptable pattern. You do not, as in the Roman Catholic Church, walk by an altar and genuflect (that is, to bow down) before that altar, because on that altar resides the host (the bread) that has supposedly been converted into the body of Jesus Christ so that He is there for you to prostrate yourself before.

1. **Submission to a Worthy Object**

The word "worship" in old English, it was spelled this way "worthship," because it was actually defining what worship is all about. This indicated that worship is an act of reverence and submission to a worthy object. The connection between worship and worthiness is very clearly evident in this passage we've been studying in Revelation 5:12: "Saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.' And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying, 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.' And the four living creature said, 'Amen.' And the elders fell down and worshiped."

So, you can see the close connection between Jesus Christ being pronounced worthy, and the act of worship. The concept of "worthship" is very closely connected.

1. **The Worship of Jesus Christ**

When we consider the worship of Jesus Christ, we have some significant information from the New Testament. We find in Matthew 14:33 that Jesus was worshiped by His disciples when they realized that He was God. And when He was risen from the dead, Matthew 28:9 and Matthew 28:17 tell us again that Jesus Christ was worshiped. On none of these occasions did Jesus say, "Hey, you mustn't do this." When John tried to worship an angel, who was one of those "ktisma" that we learned about in the previous session (those created things of God), the angel said, "Don't do it, John. That's wrong." When Cornelius tried to worship Peter as a human being, Peter said, "Don't do it. It's wrong." But Jesus Christ was the God-man, and it was fitting and proper to worship Him, and His disciples did it.

The leper who was seeking healing worshiped Jesus Christ as deity. Matthew 8:2 tells us how he bowed down before the Lord Jesus. He worshiped Him as he sought His healing. The ruler of the synagogue, a man named Jairus, whose daughter died, worship Jesus Christ by bowing down before Him (Matthew 9:18). Certainly, we remember the incident of the Roman soldiers who mocked the Lord Jesus by bowing down to Him as God in Mark 15:19. In that passage, of course, they were ridiculing Jesus Christ, who had claimed to be God, and whom the Jews were crucifying for that supposed crime. Mark 15:19 says, "And they smote Him on the head with a read, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees, they worshiped Him." You can just picture this in your mind's eye. The Lord Jesus is sitting there on some kind of a stool, beaten to a pulp by these Roman soldiers who were mutilating Him at a Pilate's orders. Pilate was hoping that Jesus would be so bruised and so mutilated that the people would pity Him and say, "Oh, just let Him go," rather than calling for His death. And indeed, they did a good job. And in the process, they did this genuflecting (bowing down) before Him because He was God.

1. **Human Beings and Angels are not to be Worshiped**

Then another point is that human beings and angels are not deity, and so, as we have seen, are not to be worshiped. Act 10:25 indicates that, and Revelation 19:10 indicates that. Thus, you do not pray to them as if they possessed divine power and authority. Prayer is an associated act of worship. You do not pray to the Virgin Mary. You do not pray to Saint Joseph. You just don't pray to human beings. It is a gross blasphemy to do so. Of course, you can see how the Roman Catholic system is based upon that concept – that there are certainly human beings who have achieved such sacredness and sainthood with God, that they are in heaven, and that they may be then approached in prayer. Bowing down before humans and angels in submission is idolatry. Even if you just do it symbolically by praying to them, it's an act of idolatry.

The antichrist knows that this is a very significant act on the part of a human being – to bow down in this act of expressing reverence and submission, and thus of worship. And he will seek this from people. So, we read of the antichrist and of Satan in Revelation 13:4: "And they worshiped the dragon (that is, Satan) who gave power unto the beast (that is, the antichrist), and they worship the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" They bow down before him.

You find the same thing in Revelation 13:8 and Revelation 13:12. Those who are unbelievers will be bowing down in worship of the antichrist.

Revelation 15:4, furthermore, tells us that ultimately all the nations of the world and all the people of earth will bow down and worship before the living God: "Who shall not fear you, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You only are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for your judgments are made manifest." So, I don't care what kind of a kooky weirdo outfit you have, whether it's in Iran, or whether it's in some benighted South American country, or in the heart of Africa – every nation, with all of its religious systems, is going to admit that they were wrong, and they're going to come in worship of the living God.

1. **The Spirit**

John 4:24 makes a very important statement concerning the doctrine of worship (the nature of the worship of God). Here is the basis for genuine worship: "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." So, there are two factors, first of all, in genuine worship. One: it is to be in Spirit. God Himself, we are told, is a spirit being. He is not what the Mormon Church says: "A flesh-and-blood being who is bound by space and time, as if he were some kind of an idol." I have never been able to figure out what the Mormons do with this verse. I have asked them, and they've always told me that they'll have to consult someone. But the Bible very clearly says that God is not a flesh-and-blood being, but He is a spirit being. So, we worship God in a spiritual way: not by a physical ritual; not by a liturgy; and, not by giving gifts. We do not worship by some outward gesture in some given place. It has no externals attached to it. It is a matter that is done internally. It is a matter of the spirit.

What this is referring to is not God the Holy Spirit. It is referring to our human spirit. That is what the word "spirit" is referring to here. Regenerated man is able to approach God via his human spirit. Notice Job 32:8, where we read, "But there is a spirit in man (a human spirit), and the inspiration (the breathing in) of the Almighty gives them understanding. Job understood that the place that God's Word was stored was in his human spirit. That is the depository. That is the reservoir.

Proverbs 20:27 adds another statement to that same factor of our human spirit as a contact point with God: "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward parts." It is the spirit of man filled with doctrine that becomes the illumination to guide him in his life. That is a beautiful statement. The divine and the human meet, as God the Holy Spirit teaches man's spirit and leads us to the worship of God.

Thus, we read in Romans 8:16: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." God's spirit teaches our human spirit. External acts in worship tend to suppress internal worship. So, we worship by means of our human spirit – not by external things.

1. **Truth**

The next factor key to worship is truth: "In spirit and in truth." This refers, of course, to the truth of God's revelation to man in the Bible. Paganistic practices in public worship, such as the Roman Catholic Mass, are blasphemies. They are abominations to God because it's not the truth. The only way to arrive at a genuine adoration and reverence for God is by getting to know Him through the learning of doctrine. That's the highest moment of worship. This is what people often don't like to hear. The highest moment of worship flows from the point of learning the Word of God in the local church service, and in your private devotions. That is the highest point of worship. That shoots down all of the formal denominations with all the hoopla, because none of that means anything. It is basically distracting from the Word of God. The highest point is when you sit in the presence of instruction of the Word of God, and you get to know Him through the truth of Scripture, so that you can admire, adore, and have reverence for Him. The heart bows before God in adoring contemplation based on the teaching of the Bible – occupation with what we learned about him.

John 4:23 tells us that God is daily seeking people who are ready to worship Him in their human spirits and in truth.

1. **Prayer**

The next point is that the inward attitude of adoration and subjection, found by the intake of Bible doctrine into the human spirit, may be expressed as worship in a variety of ways. What you have received in your human spirit can express itself in worship via praising God for His grace – the blessings that He gives us, and that He is the source of all our needs. Prayer is an expression of our adoration of Him, because when we pray to Him, we show that we believe that He can meet the need, and we are confident that He is fully capable and ready to meet the need. You don't go asking someone for something who cannot produce. And that is what prayer is: When you really know God, and you really admire Him, you're ready to walk up to Him and ask what is seemingly impossible.

When I was in California this last week, one of our friends that we were visiting with had just been to a church service. They came back and they said, "Do you know what we were told? The preacher said that the main thing in prayer is asking God for something." And I said, "That's right." They said, "It is?" I said, "That's exactly what the Bible means about prayer. Your confidence in God that He can produce, and that He'll come through for you is such that you back your three-ton truck up to the dock and say, "Load it up, Lord. I'd like this, and this, and this, and this." Now, you may praise Him, and you may thank Him, and you may do other things, but those are secondary elements. The main thing of prayer is asking. And when you treat God like that, it is indeed an expression of your admiration for His capacity. It is an expression of worship.

1. **Water Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

Water baptism and the Lord's Supper are visual portrayals of the worthiness of Jesus Christ in His service as the Lamb of God.

1. **Learning Bible Doctrine**

The study of doctrine exalts God as the source of all real truth against the delusions of human viewpoint.

1. **Preaching**

Preaching is part of worship because it causes God to be adored by those who get to know His character.

1. **Confession of Sins**

Confession of sins, of course, clears the way for worship in spirit and in truth. It lays the groundwork.

1. **Occupation with the Mind of God**

Another point is that worship is occupation with the mind of God, so any distracting elements must be removed. If you are going to worship God, you must be occupied with Him. If you are going to worship Him in this service right now by absorbing spiritual phenomena (doctrinal truths), it must be without distraction. Therefore, we have to come down pretty hard once in a while on the way people act in a local church service. For that reason, we call upon you not to create distractions during the local service. We call upon you not to sleep in the church service. And if you do, we call upon you to at least have the good grace not to snore. We suggest that it would be better for you and those around you if you did sit catching up on your reading during the church service. Stay at home if you've got reading to catch up on.

**Order in the Church Services**

We ask that you do not move around the auditorium unnecessarily. We ask that you take care of needs that are going to need to be taken care of beforehand, such that there is minimal distraction in that way. We ask that you do not bring your soft drink bottles or your coffee cups into the service. Do not whisper, talk, or giggle during the teaching of the Word of God. That is greatly undermining a person's ability to worship God because you distract his concentration.

And don't sit there popping and cracking your gum. Don't file your fingernails, and don't bring one of those clippers that clips your fingernails. You know what a noise that makes. Every now and then, somebody comes in, and it's quiet in here, and this place just reverberates, as you know. And they clip a nail off, and it goes, "Boom," all over the place. Then you can even hear the nail falling on the floor. Then they clip another one, and everybody knows what they're doing. Pretty soon I can see people looking around, and they're distracted, and I know that they're no longer adoring God, and they're no longer taking in the Word of God. So, they've been robbed. So, don't be combing your hair and plucking your eyebrows during the service.

It would also be advisable not to come late. I once heard a lady who had been very high in witchcraft in a California cult, and she said that one of the things that amazed her when she became a Christian was that people come late to the services. They just saunter in at all times. She said, "When I was in witchcraft, when the service was appointed, we had to be there ahead of time to be sure we were on time. And if you walked in late, you had to come up front, and take some beatings from a strap across your back." They had a whip there, and you were whipped publicly for not coming on time. I'm loathe to institute such a custom, but it would be certainly advisable and desirable to not destroy people's adoration by coming in early. There are a lot of good parts of the service you miss by coming late. Sometimes we deliberately try to put things that are attention-catching and important right up front, so that there's nobody coming in and saying, "Oh man, we have to go through a certain ritual before the real thing begins."

One of the things that I might also suggest is that you don't sit in church swiveling your head around on your neck, looking the congregation over. You'd be surprised how often people sit here, and I don't know how in the world they do that. They have funny necks. Their bodies are this way, and the heads are swiveling. It looks like they're swiveling 360 degrees in every direction. They're checking out what Mrs. So-and-so is wearing; what kind of tie Jackson has there; and, how much hair so-and-so has left on his head. I don't know what else it is that they're checking out, but boy, they're up there swiveling and looking around. They're not adoring God, and neither are the other people. They're distracting.

1. **Old Testament Rituals are Obsolete**

Another point that after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all of the Old Testament pictorial rituals of worship and the animal sacrifices became obsolete. John 1:29 and Hebrews 10:26 tell us that. So, that is why we don't go through rituals that we have carried over from the Old Testament, or that kind of a liturgical order of service. All of that was pictures before the reality, and it's dead. And it is deadening to be in a service like that.

1. **Every Believer is his own Priest**

Another point is that there's no need during the church age for a special priesthood to lead us in worship, since every believer is his own priest (1 Peter 2:9), and Jesus Christ is our High Priest.

1. **Sunday**

Sunday became the Christian day of special worship for the believers. Because we are a new creation, and because we are a New Testament, we needed a new day. The Old Testament had Saturday, the Sabbath day. We have a new day (John 20:19, John 20:26, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Revelation 1:10). All of these verses indicate that Christians worshiped on the first day of the week on Sunday. And don't call Sunday the Christian Sabbath. Those are mutually exclusive terms.

1. **Local Church Gatherings**

Another point is that the elements of New Testament local church gatherings were very specific. What happened in a local church gathering? There was, of course, the teaching and the preaching of doctrine (Acts 11:26, Acts 20:7). There was the reading of Scripture (1 Timothy 4: 13). There was prayer (Acts 2:42). There was the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 11:17-30). There was singing (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16).

There was also fellowship. Christians said, "Hello to each other." They smiled at each other. And they were indeed, in their costume at that time, very free in exchanging the affection of the holy. In some parts of our country, that is very prominent. I don't know when I've been kissed so much as when I was out in California. Just about all of the old timers ended up planting a kiss on Mrs. Danish and me. And that's something you have to get used to. But it is an expression of fellowship. Acts 2:42 speaks about fellowship – that exchange of Christian warmth between believers. They didn't just come in, and then quickly leave after the service was over. They stood around, and they talked to one another. They might say, "How's it going with you? Is there anything I can do to help? What concerns do you have?" And they weren't only interested in their self-promotion, and their self-development. They had a concern for the rest of the body, and a possibility to minister to it.

Then, of course, there was giving. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 tell us about that.

**The First Expression of Worship in the Bible**

We'll tie this up tonight with the first recorded expression of worship in the Bible. You have to go back to Genesis 22:1-2. This is the first expression of worship in terms of bowing down in adoration and submission before God. This is the incident of the call to Abraham by God to sacrifice his son, Isaac. This incident suggests to us certain basic qualities about worship: "And it came to pass after these things that God did test Abraham, and said unto him, 'Abraham,' and he said, 'Behold, here I am.' He said, 'Take now your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and get into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of." These two verses indicate that we have a call to worship that came from God – not a human viewpoint creation. Furthermore, the act of worship was guided by God. So, if you're going to worship God, do it His way, or don't think that you're worshiping Him. We have mentioned quite a bit about that in this session.

Verse 3: "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and cut the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him." He was faithful in conformity to the divine guidelines for worship. Abraham proceeded to execute the directions. He followed the known will of God. He acted with prompt, unswerving obedience, and he did not add any embellishments of his own that would appeal to his sin nature. He didn't try to soup it up or to jack it up some way. He just did exactly what God said: "This is the way I want you to worship Me."

Verses 4 and 5: "Then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, "Abide here with the arts, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Worship here was to be expressed through personal sacrifice, which is often indeed the way we adore and express our reverence to God – with the sacrifices of our praise, and certainly, as priests, with the practice of spiritual sacrifices.

Abraham knew what was in store now as he saw the place for his son. He viewed it as the place of sacrifice, and without flinching, he proceeded. Abraham separated himself from the world around him to privately execute this adoration of God. That's what he was doing in the expression of his adoring confidence in the trustworthiness of God.

Furthermore, notice that he declared to his helpers that Isaac and he would go now to the place to worship, and you notice: "And come again to you:" I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." What in the world did he have in mind by saying that? He knew that God said, "Kill the boy." And he says, "I'm going to go up there and worship God" (knowing that God had told him how to worship – by sacrificing the son). And he was proceeding to obey God. What did he specifically have in mind?

Well, Hebrews 11:17, interestingly enough (and fortunately), tells us what he was thinking: "By Faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac, your seed shall be called, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from which also he received him in a figure." Abraham fully expected to plunge that knife across the throat of his son Isaac, and to slash it to let the blood out, as was the form of sacrifice, and he fully expected that whatever was going to happen after it was all over – that God, whom He worshiped with such adoration and confidence, was going to raise that boy Isaac to life again, because he knew that God had already told him that there can be no other human being through which the promises can be fulfilled that I have made to you, including a Messiah Savior for the world, except through this boy Isaac. Abraham was no dummy.

Genesis 22:6-10: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac, his son, and he took the fire in his hand, and the knife, and they went both of them together. And Isaac spoken unto Abraham his father, and said, 'My father.' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' He said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.' So, they went both of them together."

That's a significant statement. Abraham is over 100 years old here. This boy is probably 13 or 14 years old. He's got some muscle. Abraham is old enough that he's becoming a little feeble. Things are slowing down for him. Here he is, going along with this boy, and the boy is totally obedient. That's interesting.

Every now and then, we have a family who visits church with little children, and they sit in this service, and people come back to me and they say, "Did those kids? Can you believe how quiet they were; how they sat there; how obedient they were to their parents; and, that they didn't make any noise and distractions? And that's exactly the way they are. It's a beautiful picture of parents who have learned how to bring their children in subjection to their authority while they are in the years under their authority. Abraham did a good job with little Isaac. He went along with his dad.

Verse 9 says, "And they came to the place where God had told him of, and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood." Isaac could have fought back because now he got the picture. He knew exactly what his father was going to do, but instead he permitted himself to be tied, and he permitted himself to be put on that altar. He sat there, and watched as his father raise the knife above him, ready to slash that throat.

"Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son, and the Angel of the Lord (the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) called unto him out of heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham.' He said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not lay your hand upon the lad. Neither do anything unto him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son: your only son from Me." The death of Isaac was imminent. The external actions demonstrate a total subjection on the part of this boy. Here in verse 11-12, we find that the Father delights in worship, which is in total submission to His Word. That's the big lesson. There's nothing that pleases God the Father more than when we worship Him the way He told us: in spirit – not through external rinky-tinks; and, in truth – in the learning of doctrine. That is the highest expression of worship on the part of the believer, because that's what makes it all come together.

Then you may pursue verse 13-19 on your own. It describes the great blessings which were received by this genuine act of worship. Abraham received all that he was ready to give to God, and much, much more. He got his son back, but he got a whole lot more. He approached worship with a burdened heart, but because he worshiped in spirit and in truth, on the way God told him, and with a heart attitude (a mental attitude) of admiration and appreciation for God, he came back with the joy bells ringing in his heart.

The object of worship is God – not our human desires that we esteem. This is the eternal God who revealed Himself in the Bible; the God who created man in His own image; the God who is in charge; and, the God who sovereignly tells us how we are to go about dealing with him. God judges our evil; He provides salvation for eternity; and, He provides blessings for time for those who worship Him in the humility, and in the sincerity, and in the genuineness characterized by Abraham.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

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