

Worship in the Light of God

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[0 : 00] And as you're turning there, just to know if you have any questions, my wife and I are excited to meet you. Please do not be offended if we don't know your names. My wife has promised to remember them all by next Sunday, but she's kind of a high achiever girl, I'm not.

So we will do our best, but we sincerely appreciate the love and warmth that we've received from the hugs, the handshakes, and the hosting. Interesting. I have a few questions that I want to ask you.

I hope you don't mind, but I'm going to ask them anyway. When I say the word worship, what comes to mind?

Let me ask it another way. If after some time during the week someone comes up to you and says, how was your worship on Sunday, what do you think about?

How do you respond? Do you think about the singing? Do you think about the preaching? Do you gauge worship by the energy that might have appeared here?

[1 : 16] Or perhaps it was an emotional response? Or do you respond, well, I had a really great time of worship during my quiet time earlier in the week.

Perhaps it was as you were meditating on God's word, or perhaps listening to some Christian music, or maybe you were just captivated by the beauty that God has surrounded this city with, and we're just in awe of God.

Let me ask you an even bigger question. Have you ever wondered if what you consider to be worship is what God considers to be worship?

Let me repeat that. Have you ever wondered if what you consider worship to be what God considers worship?

Which begs the question, does how we worship actually matter to God?

[2 : 33] Believe it or not, I'll just give you a quick history on the word worship. First shows up in Genesis 22.5. A man by the name of Abraham is about to sacrifice his son to Isaac.

Genesis 22.5 reads, Then Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.

Worship for Abraham was offering up a burnt offering unto God. We later find out in Genesis that worship is described as a physical worship.

It actually describes it is to revere, or it is to adore, or it even gives a physical description of prostrating oneself physically as a means of worship.

Exodus 12.27, Moses writes, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel and Egypt when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.

[3 : 44] And the people bowed their heads and worshipped. One of my favorite definitions is, Worship can be described as rendering homage to God that would be sinful to render to any other created being.

Let me repeat that. As rendering homage to God that would be sinful to render to any created being. In the Old Testament, worship was seen as something specific that one did or participated in. It was listening to God's word. It was prayer. It was participating in the religious festivals. It was offering sacrifices at the temple. And what's interesting is the form of worship changed over time, but the center of worship did not.

From Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Ezra, they all worshipped differently, but it was the same. In the New Testament, Jesus arrives on the scene of the time where the temple was in Jerusalem, and it was quite an industry, this worship industry.

We've come to conclude that the Jews had become far too dependent on a physical place being the temple for worship. When Jesus arrived, he did something very differently.

[5 : 11] He declared that he is the place where you worship. Instead of a temple in resurrection, he would provide the spiritual dwelling where God the Spirit and his people in spirit could have spiritual communion.

In other words, worship would no longer be in a place, but in a person. person, through Jesus Christ and his spirit, the worshipers, could come directly to God.

As a pastor, as a Christian, I have observed in our times that sadly, we have moved the place of worship from Jesus to man.

in the church in North America, I believe there is a, what I call a personalization of faith, like never before.

And what I mean by that is we tend to see our faith, and by extension, as our worship, as more as a personal endeavor, as opposed to a corporate endeavor.

[6 : 26] It's how I feel. And it's quite easy to see why people believe this, because when we often present the gospel, we are calling people to make a personal decision for God, right?

We're doing it as an individual, as a person. Accept Jesus into my heart. Accept Jesus as my own personal Savior. And this has led some to think that this holds our personal experience above what we have learned previously in Scripture.

It leads people to place a time of adoration on their own, whether it be with nature, their own music, or their own friends. And the danger is with the personalization of faith comes a personal God.

We know and understand from Genesis that we are created in God's image. Amen? But sometimes we think God is in our image.

You get the problem there? So we also err in thinking worship is about us, and forget that worship is about God.

[7 : 42] So, simple question. Does God care? Personally, I believe that worship isn't simply about adoration.

I believe it's adoration that leads somewhere. Bob Kaufman, well-known music leader, states being moved emotionally is different from being changed spiritually.

So the question is, does God care, or does God have an opinion on the subject? Is God a somehow a laissez-faire God who cares not how his people worship him, but instead he is happy and he hopes that in some way some people somewhere will worship him?

Let me read you this text of Leviticus 10. Now, Nadab and Abihu, these were the sons of Aaron's, and priests in the temple each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which God had not commanded them.

And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Let me ask you a question.

[9 : 04] Again, do you think God cares about how we worship? Please turn with me Isaiah 6.

What I want to do in this passage, I'm not going to comment what your form of worship is, but we're going to look at an example of biblical worship, and we're going to take a look to see if this does measure up to what we would describe as biblical worship.

I want to look at four specific issues in regards to worship today. The first issue is, I want to look at where biblical worship begins, secondly, where biblical worship leads, thirdly, what biblical worship produces, and fourth, what biblical worship requires.

Please read along with me in Isaiah 6, starting in verse 1. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings, with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts.

[10 : 36] The whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said, Woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

And he touched my mouth, and said, Behold, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?

Then I said, Here am I. What's interesting, when Isaiah dates this passage of Isaiah 6, it's actually a time of intense judgment on the people of God.

They've been trying, trying again, and eventually God, the kings not following after him, eventually brings in, as chapter 5, verse 25, it says, Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people.

[12:05] We know the story. The Assyrians and the Babylonians, and later the Persians, would take them all away from Israel, and they would be living in exile for 70 years.

And I really believe that God has placed this passage strategically in here to let Isaiah know, and let those that know God, that he is still the Lord of Lords, and the God of Gods.

So let's take a look at this, this chapter. It's filled with incredible imagery. So we know that Isaiah is one of the major prophets, and he has this vision, and this first idea that we've seen of a throne is God often uses symbols that man understand.

And what this would mean to man, understanding throne, was a kingdom, an earthly kingdom. And this was a huge throne room. And this would indicate that the larger the throne, the larger the room, would be a symbol of his kingship and his sovereignty.

So even though God's people are going into exile, God still reigns. These seraphims, we see them as angels, literally meaning burning ones.

[13:19] With their wings over their face, it depicts humility. In God's presence, they dare not look at his face. With the wings over the feet, it depicts purity, that they're in there without sin.

And the seraphim called to one another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is filled of his glory.

And we see this emphasis on holiness. So I want to make this very specific great point here. The first truth we learn from Isaiah is that true biblical worship begins with a right and true understanding of God.

Worship begins with a right and true understanding of God. Get that? God is holy.

God is holy. What he means here is he is not like us. It's simple.

[14:27] By stating holy, holy, holy, they are declaring God's essence and identity being in terms of an all-surpassing holiness. Holiness. Sometimes we look around and we say, you know, Bill is pretty much holier than James, meaning that there is a set of rules that they believe Bill follows that perhaps James doesn't.

And in the eyes of some, he might be a more mature Christian, but it's not that type of holiness we're talking about. We're talking about the absolute holiness that separates us from the Creator. This is an immense idea. He is all. We are not. God is infinite.

We are not. God is holy, which means he's separate from creation. We are involved in creation. God's moral majesty is complete and without rival.

As one author puts it, holiness is the entirety of the divine perfection that separates God from creation. Holiness includes all of God's attributes.

[15:42] His holiness is what defines him and it separates him from us. So when we ask ourselves the question, are we having a time of worship?

Are the words that we are declaring about God greater than us? Or are we seeing him in our eyes? When it comes to worship, it becomes personal? Or is it something that we spectate in? See, what's interesting is that by definition it can be described as that when we worship with an understanding that God is holy and the whole earth is full of his glory, how do we prepare to meet such a God? How does it affect how we listen? How do we pray? How do we act? And do we encounter anything like this vision of God?

One author writes, worship is the people of God coming together to confess his worthiness, his worth to be worshipped. Scripture makes it clear that subjective expression of worship must build on an objective truth of the true and living God to which God has revealed himself in Scripture.

[17:14] Do you understand that any idea that we have in worshipping God which does not root itself in God's word is untrustworthy?

What's interesting about worship is that the unifying aspect of God is this subjective aspect allows worship to transcend all time and all cultures. You and I do not have to worship the same way as Abraham did.

We do not have to sing the same songs as David did. But what God asks us is to continue in understanding God, tailoring our worship to him.

If you want to know what people believe about God, watch them worship. Hebrews 10.31 says, it is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of a living God.

Is the God that we worship, is he alive or is he dead? So the second truth we learn from Isaiah is that biblical worship leads to confession of sin.

[18 : 20] Biblical worship leads to confession of sin. Check out verse 5. And I said, woe is me for I am lost.

If you happen to be using the New American Standard version, it said, I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. With Isaiah in the Lord's presence, he sees God's majesty, his power, his moral nature. He sees everything that he isn't.

How great and grandiose is God? And he simply responds, I am doomed to die. I believe this must happen in our worship.

If we do not come face to face with our sin as individuals and as a church, we have not seen God and thus are not worshipping God.

[19 : 21] What this means is we are confronted with God. do we bring ourselves to a time of confession? The reality is, I believe as Christians, we want a comfortable God.

We want a God that is easy with our sin but sometimes harsh with others, right? We want mercy for our sins but we ask God to bring justice on those who sinned against us.

but if I asked you right now, who is the Jesus that you think about? I believe there's two extremes.

The one Jesus that a lot of people really love is Jesus at the well. Remember the story in John?

Meets the woman who had eight husbands and he comes to her.

He's a wonderful man to be around, right? He's loving, encouraging. She's a Samaritan. He shouldn't even be talking to her. But yet he is and the picture is a very warm, understanding, friendly of God and who doesn't want to be in that type of presence of God?

[20 : 27] Sadly, I've met too many people who want to live in that presence and not leave meaning they want to stay there but they don't want to change. Whenever there's sin or they're dealing with something in their life, they keep going back to that time.

I submit that sometimes we need to forget about the Jesus at the well and think about the one who sits at the right hand of God.

Luke 22, 69 tells us that Jesus now dwells at the right hand of God. If you're unfamiliar with what this means, this is the power position in heaven.

This is the man who will execute God's judgment and righteousness for God. What kind of power does Jesus have?

Let me take you on a little sidetrack to inform you. Matthew 26, 53, Jesus guarding Gethsemane. Romans are trying to get him. Peter takes out his sword.

[21 : 33] He's going to take on the whole Roman army. And Jesus simply says, Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels?

What's 12 legions of angels mean? What kind of power is that? Well, let me flush this out. We understand at that time a legion would mean 6,000 angels.

So, just doing the math, 12 legions would mean he has 72,000 legions at his disposal. That still doesn't tell us the power of God, right?

It doesn't tell us the power that is at his disposal. So, the question we need to ask is what is the power potential of a single angel?

Or, to say it in a more blunt way, what is the killing potential of an angel? Well, the Bible actually tells us.

[22 : 37] 2 Chronicles 32, 20. Jerusalem is being attacked by the Assyrian army. They're surrounded. You can almost think of them. They're a military base.

They're being overrun. They get on the Morse machine, send the code, drop the bomb. Whatever you need to do, we need to be saved. God does something.

Tells us that he sent one angel to rescue his people. The next day, when they opened gates, 185,000 Assyrians were dead.

So, we know from that that the killing potential of one angel is 185,000. So, if we took 72,000 angels and multiplied that, what kind of killing potential would we have?

13,320,000,000 minimum. That's the kind of power that our God has who sits on the right hand of God.

[23 : 46] I'll be honest with you, I do love the Jesus at the well. But I realize that when Jesus comes back, he's not coming to sit at a well.

He's coming to render judgment. And that is what motivates me to share the loving news of the gospel with my friends who do not know him. See, what Isaiah experienced was true conviction and repentance.

the contrite and broken heart of one who knows he or she has done something wrong and has insulted the one true and living God. I think we need to ask the question when we think we've had an encounter with God, is it truly void of any fear of God or any wonder of God?

And if it isn't, maybe it's not God who we've had the confrontation with. Let me tell you the third truth we learn from Isaiah about biblical worship.

The third truth is that it produces an understanding of the gospel. The true worship produces an understanding of the gospel.

[24 : 54] Look at verse 6. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said, Behold, this has touched your lips.

Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. This scene that we're seeing is actually the anticipating work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

You know that? That coal wasn't heated in a campfire somewhere. This coal was actually heated at the foot of the cross when the Lord poured out his wrath on his son for payment for the sin that we did.

Isaiah has come face to face with his sin. And what does he do? He confesses. Notice, there's nothing else that he does.

It doesn't say that he offered a special plea. It doesn't say that he had a secret prayer or that he was smart enough or he was the right family or he went and conducted certain actions in order to receive that atonement.

[26 : 03] He just had to believe. As one author states, this is grace in action. Grace is costly.

The coal, after all, came from the ultimate altar of sacrifice, the cross itself. True biblical worship requires seeing the true and living God and then seeing ourselves as we actually are in our own sinfulness.

And turning to God through confession, we experience and display the declaration of redemption. Amen? You see, true worship always proclaims the gospel.

The good news of what Jesus did. And Jesus Christ proclaims the work of Christ and it's centered on the cross. That's why Paul says, in the cross of Christ we glory.

See, when we share the gospel with someone, we're declaring liberty to the captive. We proclaim grace and pardon to all who believe in the name of Jesus Christ. The question, what is a Christian?

[27 : 14] It is someone, first and foremost, who has been forgiven of his sin and has been brought back into harmony with God. A Christian is someone who sees God as he really is and sees himself as he really is.

he repents of his sins and puts his or her faith in the perfect life, the substitutionary death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

You see, God is using that coal, heeded at the cross, the place of sacrifice, and no sin is too great for that sin to be atoned for.

I'll tell you what the greatest tragedy is. It's someone who sees God, understands that he's holy, second of all, sees his own sin, but says, whoa, wait there God, let me go clean myself up, get my stuff together, and then come back to you.

Notice what they're saying? They can do in their own actions, their own righteousness, what God did on the cross for them. If you ask them that, they will try to do special work, special prayers, they might desire to live a more moral life, give more money to the church, but that will never accomplish what the coal accomplishes.

[28 : 39] Because anything they think that they can do to put themselves in with good standing before God, they will choose over the coal. But a Christian is the one who has reached the end of himself and his moral resources and knows there's only one thing to put his trust in.

Reality is we don't realize how sinful we really are, but in that we don't understand how great God's love for us is either. So my friends, today the first truth we learn from Isaiah is that true biblical worship begins with a right and true understanding of a living God.

God's love for us to be God's love for us. The second truth we learn from Isaiah is that biblical worship leads to confession of sin. The third truth we learn from Isaiah is that biblical worship produces an understanding of the gospel.

And the fourth truth we learn from Isaiah is that biblical worship demands a response. It demands a response.

Let's look at this verse. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us?

[29 : 57] Then I said, Here I am. Send me. Think of the picture that's been painted here.

We believe Isaiah is approximately 16 years of age. He hasn't begun his great ministry. He's filled with this temple with this mighty throne above him.

Have you ever met anybody that kind of wows you? You know, some people get excited when they meet movie stars. Some people get excited when they meet, you know, famous athletes.

Before I became a pastor, I actually worked in government service. And I'm going to let you know something about me.

I can be a bit of a clown. I like to have fun. You know, I might switch someone's code on the photocopier so it prints upside down or whatever kind of jokes, right?

[30 : 59] Then one day the minister of justice came in. This is like my boss's boss's biggest boss. And I didn't know who they were. And I got into the elevator.

And I was about to say something. Just a little snip comment. And just the look on this man's face made me realize it's best to just keep your mouth shut and go up the elevator and not say anything. Just the way he carried himself. But what Isaiah experienced is so much more than that. He's in this room.

It's filled with angels who he's never seen before shouting God's holiness. The reflection of God's glory and majesty is seen everywhere. There's smoke.

There's fire. There's fire. I don't know how you would respond. I don't know if I'd hide behind a pillar. Maybe behind an angel. I'd find my way in the farthest back of his seat.

[32 : 08] I don't know if he sticks his hands up and says, hey, I'll go. I don't know if he meekly just sticks his hand up thinking maybe God will pass over him.

We don't know. But we know that God asks this simple question. Who will go for me? He simply states, here I am.

Send me. You know why he can do that? Because he's been redeemed. Amen? That's why we sing the songs that boldly we can come before the throne of God.

You know, we will struggle with that. A lot of Christians, we struggle. We struggle with our own sin, our shame of our past sin. And sometimes I was just having a conversation with a young Christian boy who's just looking at his life and trying to turn around.

And he says, you know, sometimes I feel ashamed that I can't even come to him in prayer. I just ask him, do you adore God?

[33 : 12] Has he taken away your sins? Are you forgiven? Yes. Then you can boldly come before your father in heaven and ask him anything. I don't know you guys.

I'm looking forward to knowing you. But I don't know. Maybe some of you guys are having certain demands that you know God is placing on your life.

For one reason or another, you might be escaping it. You wonder if you feel scared that God might not give you the power to do his will.

Perhaps you feel sin. You feel the shame of your past sin. Sometimes you just find yourself making plenty of excuses. Some lack trust.

Some lack faith. But you know in the deepest part of your heart, God is calling you to live a holy life. And he's calling you to do something with that life.

[34 : 17] I know one guy used to do in this men's Bible study. He says, when I come to the study, I don't like to do the work. Because if I do the work, then I'm not responsible for the work, right? If I have this extra knowledge of God, then I have to do something with that knowledge.

The question I have for you is, what God do you want to worship?

You see, our worship is not formed by how we worship, but it's formed by who we worship. Amen?

The who determines the how. The truth of the matter is, there's plenty of hard truths of life. Often we know that by knowing his word, by responding to his word and his obedience, God might ask us for something more than we are prepared to give.

But I'm going to tell you, as one who sat there in a very comfortable government job, wondering if I wanted to really give it all to become a preacher of his word, it took me seven years to finally get to that point of saying, yes, I give it all.

[35 : 34] And I always look back wondering, why did I wait those seven years to follow him? My prayer for you, I don't know your story.

If you think there's something holding you back, I pray that you would ask God to remove that burden, that barrier, and that you indeed follow him and give all that you have in worship to him. Let me pray for you. Let me pray for you.