

John MacArthur

**TRUE
WORSHIP III**

Study Notes – Selected Scriptures

c. ***The Perspective of True Worshipers*** (see p. 28)

Picking up where we left off, we ended the last lesson looking at Hebrews 12:28-29. The writer of Hebrews says, “*Wherefore, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, by which we may serve [Gk. *latreuō* ‘worship’] God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.*” When we worship God acceptably, there is to be a balance between reverence and fear. Reverence can be looked at as positive affirming the value and worth of God. Fear can be looked at as negative — affirming the judging, chastening, punishing, “*consuming fire*” of verse 29. So, a true worshiper worships out of reverence for God, as well as fear of Him.

If we have been redeemed, we are the true worshipers. And as true worshipers, we must worship acceptably. Now, I admit that even though we are true worshipers, we don’t always worship as truly as we ought because of the sin that is in us; but that is our goal. We are called to worship God acceptably with a positive affirmation that since He’s a consuming fire we have reason to fear if we don’t worship Him acceptably.

d. ***The Personal Characteristics of True Worshipers***

How do we manifest true acceptable worship in our everyday lives?

1) *Our treatment of fellow believers*

Romans 14 talks about not making a weaker brother stumble or destroying him with the liberty we may have. Then in verse 18a, Paul says, “*For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God . . .*” In other words, acceptable worship is a matter of how we treat our fellow believers.

2) *Winning someone to Jesus Christ*

In Romans 15:16, Paul, thanking God for the grace which called him into the ministry, makes an amazing statement: “*That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable... .*” In other words, Paul saw his Gentile converts as acceptable offerings which were given to God. So, winning someone to Jesus Christ is acceptable worship. The gaining of a soul can be offered to God as an act of holy, acceptable worship.

3) *Giving money to meet needs*

Paul wrote to the Philippians, in part, to thank them for a gift of money they had sent him. He was glad they sent it because it was an act of love. In 4:18 he said, “*But I have all, and abound. I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.*” Their gift of money to meet Paul’s need was an acceptable sacrifice to God. Acceptable worship is giving your resources to support the saints, the work of the church, and the ministry of Christ.

Now watch, the sum of these first three characteristics of acceptable worship — how we treat fellow Christians, winning non-Christians to Christ, and giving money to meet needs — is sharing. **Worship is sharing** — sharing your love, sharing the gospel, and sharing your resources. That exalts, honors, and glorifies God because it puts Him on display through your life and shows that you’re obedient to Him. It also shows that you love those whom He loves: the saints, the lost, and the needy. Sharing is acceptable worship.

4) *Living a life of goodness, righteousness, and truth*

In Ephesians 5:8b-10, Paul says, “*.... walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit [lit. ‘light’] is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*” Living a life of goodness, righteousness, and truth (i.e., personal holiness) is a life of acceptable worship.

Now, if you're not in this worshipping "cycle," you'd better get in. How? Confess your sins and start right now. People say, "Well, I've got so many problems in my Christian life, I just can't be committed to being consistent." People who say that basically have one of two problems: either they're not worshipping six days a week with a worshipping life, or they're not worshipping one day a week in the assembly of the saints. We need both! If you go to church just when it's convenient, you're never going to get your act together. You can't do it on your own — you've got to have the faithful, consistent stimulation to love and good works that a body of people brings to bear on your life. Unfortunately, we live in such an easy-come-easy-go, casual, flippant society, that people don't make those kinds of consistent, faithful commitments —and then they wonder why they can't get their act together! We all need to join with a worshipping assembly as well as live each day with a worshipping life.

Well, worship is important because Scripture is dominated with it, destiny is determined by it, and thirdly...

C. Eternity And Redemptive History Are Described By It

Worship is important because it's the major theme of eternity and redemptive history.

1. PRE-CREATION HISTORY

In eternity past, before men were created, what existed? The Trinity and the angels. What did they do? Well, in Nehemiah 9:6b, it says, "... *and the host of heaven worshipeth Thee.*" What went on in eternity past? Worship (cf. Job 38:4-7).

2. PRE-FALL HISTORY

When Adam and Eve were created they worshiped God as they walked and talked with Him in the Garden. However, sin entered the picture when Eve chose to worship Satan, and Adam chose to worship Eve. As soon as they ceased worshipping God, they fell (Gen. 3:1-13).

3. POST-FALL HISTORY

a. *Cain and Abel*

In Genesis 4, the first division among men came between Cain and Abel over the way they worshiped. Abel brought an acceptable offering (4:4), but Cain's was unacceptable (4:5).

b. *The Patriarchs*

When the patriarchs worshiped God properly they were blessed, but when they worshiped Him unacceptably they were chastened.

c. *The Nation Israel*

1) *In the desert*

When the nation of Israel was taken out of Egypt, they wandered for forty years in the Sinai desert until an entire generation died. They lost their lives without entering the Promised Land simply because they failed to worship God properly (Num. 14:22-23). Even Moses never entered the land because he failed to worship God properly (Num. 20:7-12).

2) *In the Promised Land*

When the nation of Israel finally got into the land, they worshiped God as He wanted to be worshiped and were subsequently blessed (Neh. 9:3; I Chr. 29:20-25). However, the time came when they did not worship God properly (Acts 7:42-43), so He punished them and ultimately scattered them all over the world.

d. *Jesus*

When Jesus began His ministry, He went to Jerusalem, walked into the place of worship, took a whip, and cleaned the place out (Jn. 2:13-17). After He dealt with the corrupt worshipers in John 2, He called for true worshipers in John 4:23-24. Worship was always the issue —the central theme of redemptive history.

4. PRESENT HISTORY

When the church was born, it was an assembly of worshipers. Philippians 3:3 is one of the greatest statements on worship in the Bible — a definition of the church: *“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”* In other words, the church is uniquely identified as God’s people — but not through physical circumcision. The church is made up of those who worship God in their spirit, rejoicing in Christ, with no confidence in the flesh.

5. FUTURE HISTORY

When history consummates in the glory of the return of Christ, it consummates in worship. Worship is the theme of heaven and of eternity. For example:

- a. **Revelation 4:11a** — *“The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that is seated on the throne, and worship Him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power..”*
- b. **Revelation 5:14** — *“And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped Him that liveth forever and ever.”*
- c. **Revelation 11:15b-17a** — *“. . . and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, who sat before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty ...”*
- d. **Revelation 14:6-7** — *“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”* Notice that the message of the everlasting gospel is to worship God!
- e. **Revelation 15:4a** — *“Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before Thee....”*
- f. **Revelation 19:4** — *“And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen. Hallelujah!”*
- g. **Revelation 19:10a** — *“And I [John] fell at his [the angel’s] feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not! I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God....”*
- h. **Revelation 22:8-9** — *“And I, John, saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, the prophets, and of them who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”*

That’s the theme of eternity and redemptive history: to worship the true, living, and glorious God.

So, Scripture calls us to worship, destiny calls us to worship, and just in case somebody might fall through the cracks and think they don’t need to worship, the fourth reason it’s important to worship is because .

D. Christ Commanded It

In Matthew 4:10b, our Lord said, *“. . . for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”* This statement was made directly to Satan, but it applies to every being ever created. All are responsible to worship God.

Do you worship God... as a way of life? You should! If you find it difficult to worship the Lord when you attend church on Sundays, it isn't because the music isn't right, or because the atmosphere isn't right, or because you get distracted. If you can't worship, it's because you're not worshipping during the rest of the week. Worship can't just happen once a week — it's a way of life. And when Christians do come together once a week, there should be a bursting out of true praise and worship of the heart. The worship that is enjoyed individually, will be enriched and enhanced when brought into the joy of the assembly. Worship then becomes all the more glorious!