

True Worship -- Part 1

Unacceptable Worship

Introduction; God hates religion

- A. This surprises many people.
1. They think that since religion is designed to worship God, God must be honored by men wanting to worship Him.
 2. The idea of many is that God should be happy with any worship men give Him. Men are doing this for the Lord and He should be happy and accept it.
- B. Yet scripture shows us this is not true.
1. Many times in the O.T. we see that God rejected the worship of His people. They were the people He brought out of Egypt and they were worshipping Him. Yet He rejected their worship.
 2. *Isaiah 1:13-15* **Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies; I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.** ¹⁴ *Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.* ¹⁵ *When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.*
 3. *Malachi 1:10-12* **"Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you," Says the LORD of hosts, "Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.** ¹¹ *For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts.* ¹² **"But you profane it, In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.'**
 4. This upsets some to think that God might reject their worship. Some say that this is the O.T. Things are different in the New.
 5. Yet that is not true. God still hates religion and man's worship, as a whole.
- C. God has commanded worship.
1. Worship is ordained by God. Men must worship Him in order to please Him. However not just any worship will do.
 2. We often hear, 'Worship in the church of your choice.' The idea is that men can choose the church they like and worship in a way that pleases them.
 3. This isn't so. Men must worship in the church *of the Lord's choice* and in the way the Lord demands.
 4. This is the real issue. It is not whether men should worship. Rather it is **how** men should worship. God does accept men's worship when it is true worship.
- D. We will consider unacceptable worship today.

1. Vain Worship

- A. There are several kinds of worship that the N.T. speaks of.
1. Not every worship is the same. The issue is not should we worship. It is how we should worship.
 2. Scriptures tell us that there are many ways to worship improperly. These are the worship that God hates.
 3. There is only one way to properly worship the Creator. This is the way He has commanded.
- B. Jesus spoke of '**Vain**' worship during His time on earth.
1. Matthew 15:1-9 is Jesus' discussion of 'vain worship'. The Jews are trying to find an occasion to criticize Jesus.
 2. **Matthew 15:1-2**; They accuse Jesus' disciples of breaking the traditions of the fathers. They were eating without washing their hands.

3. The Jewish elders had developed many traditions that they thought would make a person more holy. By itself, the idea of wanting to be more holy is good.
4. However God had told them how to be holy. His word defined holiness. He did not need them to add to His commands. God had said nothing about the washing of hands.
5. *Deut 4:2 "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."*
6. **15:3-6;** Jesus shows one problem with traditions of men. They often conflict with God's laws. The elders probably did not intend to ignore the command to honor one's parents when they said to make gifts to God. Yet men used it in that way.
7. **15:7-9;** Jesus quotes from Isaiah 29:13 to show what they were doing was not anything new. They were worshipping God outwardly but not inwardly.

C. Jesus calls the worship by traditions, 'vain worship'.

1. Vain means, *unsuccessful; failing to have or unlikely to have the intended or desired result, and empty of substance; devoid of substance or meaning* —Microsoft® Encarta Dictionary
2. Vain worship is empty or worthless worship. It does not have the result of honoring and glorifying God.
3. Jesus did not deny that they were worshipping. He did not deny they were worshipping Jehovah God. They were not pagans and they were not worshipping idols. They had not used the golden calves for over 700 years.
4. Yet their worship was not accepted because they accepted the traditions, commandments and ideas of men.
5. Many still do this today. They worship God and do much of what God says. Yet they add to God's word and do things He has not authorized.
6. We must continue to beware of traditions of men. Things may make good sense to us but we must serve God in His way and not ours. Instrumental music in worship is a tradition of men.
7. *Col 3:16-17 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*
8. We are to teach and admonish one another by singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to each other. By doing this we also let Christ's word dwell richly in us. We do not sing popular and worldly songs in worship.
9. All we do must be in the name of the Lord or by His authority. He has commanded us to sing. We have no command or example or need for instruments of music.

D. We see that God hates vain worship and will not accept it.

2. Ignorant Worship

A. There are many who worship God ignorantly.

1. They want to worship but they are ignorant of either Jehovah God or how to worship Him properly.
2. The pagans worshipped many gods and goddesses. They worshipped nature and men. Yet God did not accept it because it was ignorant.
3. Many worship Jehovah God. They know He is the one true God. Yet they do not worship Him properly. God does not accept their worship.
4. Some may be ignorant because they do not have access to God's word. The pagan world rejected Jehovah and He gave them up.
5. *Rom 1:22-24 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,*
6. Others are ignorant because they do not study. They have access to God's word but do not diligently study it. God will reject them.

B. Paul warned of 'Ignorant' worship on his missionary journeys.

1. In Acts 17:16 Paul comes to Athens on his 2nd missionary journey. This was a city full of idols and Paul was very upset by this.
2. **Act 17:16-21;** Paul is taken to the Areopagus. This was one of the most respected ancient courts. It would be like speaking before the Supreme Court today. He defends his doctrine about Jesus and the

resurrection.

3. **17:22-23**; They worshipped many gods. Yet there was one true God that they were ignorant of. Paul will tell them of Him.
4. The rest of Paul's sermon tells of Jehovah God. Paul tells them about Him so they will no longer be ignorant. Some are honestly ignorant. Yet when they learn the truth their either cease to be ignorant or honest.
5. **Vs 32-34**; A few ceased to be ignorant. Dionysius the Areopagite would have been a council member. A few others continued to be honest and followed Paul. Most seemed to continue to be ignorant.

C. The Scripture calls their worship **'ignorant'** or **'without knowing.'**

1. Many today are still worshipping ignorantly. Ignorance is a; *lack of knowledge; lack of knowledge or education, and unawareness; unawareness of something, often of something important* —ibid.
2. Many are simply unaware that their worship is wrong and not pleasing to God. Many are ignorant because they do not have easy access to God's word. This may be because of a lack of education or because they are in a society that suppresses the Bible.
3. Some religions and preachers do not encourage a study of God's word because they do not want people to know the truth. They want people to be dependent on them for God's word.
4. Still others are ignorant because they do not study. They are willfully ignorant. They have easy access to God's word and Bible resources yet they do not use them.
5. **Acts 17:30-31**; We must actively study God's word today. God overlooked the ignorance of man and has given him a chance to know the truth. God wants man to repent and has sent the word to him.
6. *2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*
7. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
8. An example of ignorance in worship today is the doctrine of 'salvation by faith only.' Many accept this because their church teaches it. Yet the Bible does not.
9. *James 2:24-26 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*
10. Faith is necessary but repentance and baptism are too. We must take all God says on the subject of salvation and do all He commands.
11. *2 Tim 3:15-17 ...that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work,*

D. We see that ignorant worship does not please God. We must study to be approved to Him.

3. Will Worship

A. There are many who have their own way to worship God.

1. They make their own rules. They decide what is right and wrong. They say they know they are doing what is right because they feel it is right.
2. They say they follow their heart. Their heart tells them what to do. They usually do not study the Bible so their hearts are ignorant of God's way. Their religion is vain.
3. Usually they do not meet with a church and few would even guess they are religious.

B. Paul warned the church at Colossi about this **'will worship'** or self-imposed religion.

1. **Colossians 2:15-16**; Jesus triumphed over the things of the world. He has overcome them. Therefore we should not be bound by the regulations of the Mosaic covenant. They were types and shadows of things to come.
2. **2:18-19**; Some were claiming to have seen visions. They used this to exert control over the brethren. They had false humility and perhaps prayed to God through angels, claiming they were not good enough to pray directly to God or Christ.
3. In these things they were not connected to the head, Jesus Christ. They were not nourished by the

teachings of Jesus Christ and were in error.

4. **2:20-22;** They had died with Christ in baptism (vs 11-14) and were no longer subject to earthly regulations and wisdom. They were not concerned about avoiding things that perished but about avoiding sin and wickedness.
5. **Vs 23;** These things had no value against the indulgence of the flesh. They were ‘will worship’ (KJV), ‘self-imposed religion’ (NKJV), ‘self-made religion’ (NASV) or ‘self-imposed worship’ (NIV).
6. *Col 2:23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. —Old King James.*
7. The will worship of these folks at Colosse involved asceticism. This is a lifestyle, like the Stoics, that involved self-denial. It could involve going without food, shelter, marriage or many other things.
8. These false teachers thought it make them better. They thought these things make them more righteous. However Paul says they have no value in overcoming the temptations of the flesh.

C. Making our own religion is ‘**will worship**’. It is man’s worship and not God’s religion.

1. It is the peak of pride that makes us think we can make our own way to heaven. It is great foolishness to think that what pleases us pleases God.
2. *Jer 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*
3. Men have great ideas of what will please God. They may be very serious in trying to be righteous. However if we do not do so according to God’s word, we are foolish.
4. *Isa 55:6-9 Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. 8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."*
5. Many have tried asceticism or denying the body as a way to draw closer to God. Monasteries and Nunneries were established to get away from the world, do without the pleasures of the flesh and draw closer to God.
6. *James 4:7-8 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*
7. We draw near to God by resisting evil and purifying our hearts. God does not want us to go out of the world but to be in its midst as an example. We cannot do this locked away somewhere.
8. *Matt 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*
9. These folks were probably not ignorant of God’s word. However they thought they had a better way to heaven. While they would not say it, they thought they knew more than God about how to overcome the indulgences of the flesh.
10. *Matt 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*
11. We need to depend on God’s wisdom for daily living and not on man’s

D. We see that man’s will-worship does him no good.

Conclusion; There are many kinds of worship.

A. Most of them are not pleasing to God.

1. God hates man’s worship. Man’s ways are not His ways. We cannot do anything we want in religion and still be pleasing to the Lord.
2. Next week we will study what ‘**True Worship**’ is.

B. God’s way to be saved is to believe, repent and be baptized.

1. We have seen that God overlooked man’s ignorance and sent the apostles into all the world to preach the Gospel. God wants all men to be saved.
2. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*

for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

3. Yet most are not saved, even if they are religious. God still hates most religions.

C. Why not obey Christ today?