

Worship Essentials – Lecture #8

Applications

Part 1

Key Passages

Just a brief summary of some passages and then we will look at implications for designing and leading a worship service in the church.

A. The Ten Commandments (the Decalogue)

“First, I think that it is absolutely critical to any discussions of the biblical doctrines of worship to look at the Ten Commandments. ...”

- Do you find this comment surprising? Why?

“The commandments have much to say about worship. First of all, they are given in a context of worship. Israel has been delivered from Egypt, a mighty act of salvation, they are being led out of Egypt, they camp at Mount Sinai and there they encounter God. God forms them as a people; they worship Him there and God gives these commandments. It takes place in a worship environment, a very stirring story all by itself of revelation and response, but I’m thinking particularly of the first half of the Ten Commandments or the first few commandments, one through four in particular.”

- **Deuteronomy 5:6–7** (Revelation-Response)

“We are reminded, before God requires anything of us, or anything of Israel in this case and by implication of us today, before requiring anything in the commandments, God reminds us of what He has done for us. Before He requires any work from us, He reminds us of the mighty work He has done for us. He has rescued us.” ...

“Then we walk through the commandments beyond there, and each of them speaks to us about how to worship God. How do I love and worship God? By making sure that nothing is of greater importance in my life than Him. Nothing comes before Him, a Biblical principle that is repeated over and over again throughout the Bible. Nothing takes first place in my life but God alone.”

- **The second commandant:** How do we worship God? We worship Him in spirit and in truth. Not by making up God out of our own imaginations and crafting some form of God but worshipping God as he truly is and worshipping Him in Spirit. How do we worship God? We worship Him by making sure that His name is ever holy on our lips or, as we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “hallowed be thy name”.
- **The third commandment:** You shall not use the name of the Lord in vain. How do we worship God? We rest in the love of God, the grace of God, the mercies of God, the salvation of God; we rest in His presence, we set aside times for intentionality in His presence; **the Sabbath commandment**. All of these commandments, of course, are worthy of much deeper meditation.

“I think certainly **one through four** directly speak to the issues of worship, but we do not have to stop there. **Five through ten** speak to worship as well. Five reminds us that God has established authorities. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ the commandment says. We learn that submission is a critical part of worship. Six through ten remind us that basic principle of loving our neighbor as ourselves is fundamental to worship because what is the worship God is requiring? Ultimately it is justice and mercy as we have seen, and the humble walk with God.”

B. Leviticus

“A second Biblical passage that we could turn to, a kind of second worship manual, would be the Book of Leviticus. In the Book of Leviticus God provides Israel with detailed instructions for worship, very minute details. Through these details we can see, on the one hand, just the utter holiness of God, and on the other hand, the amazing grace of God that He has provided a means of worship to sinners such as ourselves so that we can approach a holy God. Leviticus magnifies the holiness of God, and that has a result of magnifying, for Christians especially, the grace of God. When we come to Jesus and hear His cry on the cross, ‘It is finished,’ He is not saying that the holiness of God has been put aside in favor of mercy, but that the mercy of God has made a way for us into the holy place of God.”

C. Hebrews 9-10

"We might tie the Book of Leviticus to a third Biblical passage, the Book of Hebrews. In particular, Hebrews chapter 9 and 10 where we find that Jesus, through His great work as our High Priest and His atoning sacrifice, has given us access to God in a new and living way. ... Christ has ushered in the age of His kingdom and, through His death and resurrection, He has made communion with the holy God possible to all who come to God through the blood of Jesus. So, Christ is, in the truest sense, our worship leader. Having offered the one acceptable sacrifice, that is Himself, and now leading us into God's very presence."

"I would recommend to you a little book by **James B. Torrance** called Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace. Torrance defines worship as, '*our participation, through the Holy Spirit, in the Son's communion with the Father.*'"

D. **John 4:1-26**

Spirit: "There is so much in this passage that we could think together about, but just a few points. First of all, is the whole idea of **worship in spirit and in truth**. Variously interpreted, but I think at a minimum we can see that worship must be spiritual, not primarily physically bounded or bounded in any local way as though worship is something that I do in a certain place or I do in a certain time." Jesus is telling us that, not only is the truth that God is Spirit going to continue to be true, but Jesus is speaking of the age that was about to be introduced, when God would pour out His Holy Spirit upon those who believe in Christ. And, because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives, wherever we are, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit; a temple that will not be limited to Jerusalem or Gerizim in any sense anymore. We are the temple of the Spirit of God."

Truth: "In **John 4:22** when Jesus corrects the woman's misunderstanding about worship, it is evident that her misunderstanding about worship is rooted in a misunderstanding about God. "You Samaritans," he says, "you worship what you do not know. We, Jews, worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews." So, we have this idea of the need to worship according to truth, not according the dictates of our imagination."

God Seeks: "We have all of that in John 4, but just as striking to me is this line in verse 23, "These are the kinds of worshipers God seeks," God is seeking. For all of our talk about seeker services and seeker sensitive worship and seeker driven worship today, I think we need to step back and consider again who the real seeker is when it comes to worship. It seems to me that the evidence suggests God Himself is the real seeker. In fact, I think that is why we find Jesus having to go through Samaria, as John 4:4 says. Because the Father is seeking worshipers for Himself and this woman and many in her community were going to be among those worshipers. Ultimately again, we have said that it is God who initiates worship, not us. God ultimately is the real seeker, not us."

E. Psalms

"Another worship manual that we should call attention to is the Book of Psalms. In the Psalms we find yet another kind of worship manual, a little different than the manual that we find for holiness worship in Leviticus. In the Psalms it is not a prescriptive manual like Leviticus but a descriptive manual, a collection of the worship expressions of the people. Especially striking to me from the Psalms is the wide range of emotions that are employed in the rightful worship of God, that range from deep lament to exuberant praise."

F. Revelation

"One last passage for our consideration now, and that is the Book of Revelation. Revelation would be a final worship manual for us. We do not have time to probe it sufficiently here, but just to make this point. In the Book of Revelation we get a marvelous glimpse into the worship of God that reaches way into the eternal future. We note that our themes in worship in the Book of Revelation will focus finally on the redeeming work of Christ, who is the Lamb of God, who purchased for Himself and for God an innumerable throng of persons, people from every nation and tribe. We also see that worship is fixed on the final triumphs of God over all that sets itself in opposition to His purposes."