

V. Gospel Worship In Biblical Perspective
Worship God!
“Where?”
I Peter 2:4–6
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February 17, 2013 – Morning Sermon

A young man I had the privilege to disciple has written an excellent primer on worship and it's titled In the Splendor of Holiness by Jon Payne. A.W. Toser has two books I'd recommend on worship. One is titled The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship and two, Worship: the Missing Jewel. Then Ron Owens has written an excellent, unique book titled Return to Worship. All of those are available in our bookstore and I think you'll find all of them extremely helpful. Now let's look at our text for this study.

I Peter 2:4-6 says [4] *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, [5] you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. [6] For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

We are on a journey in this series and we are on mile 5. We are on a Gospel pursuit of God glorifying, Christ centered, Bible shaped, and Holy Spirit empowered worship of the Triune God of glory. This isn't what I like in worship or what you like in worship. That is the journey that we're on and we're learning that journey. Being created by God, worship is an impulse within you. If you're saved you now have that impulse on steroids. You really want to worship God but you also have an old man that you need to put away because that old man will turn God's worship into false worship or fictitious worship. So we want the Word of God to shape our worship and the Spirit of God to empower our worship.

We made the point that when we're worshipping God the Father, through the Son in the Spirit that there are two features to worship. Worship is adoration and it's action. It is adoration where we're giving praise to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit but it is a verb and requires action. You *act* in worship. So you sing, confess, stand, pray, and there's an expression of dance. Some may think we didn't do that but when you look at our choreography of standing, sitting, turning to greet, raising our hands and then there's our ballet ministry that comes before us every once in a while. There are all kinds of expression of worship. There are the elements God has declared in His Word and then we give vent to them by singing, speaking, confessing, bowing, raising our hands and we do all of those things that give vent to the things that give adoration that is coming from our soul. Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me bless (reach up and give praise to God with our lips and lives) His holy Name. It is adoration in action.

There are two factors of worship. There is life worship which we do every day. *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (I*

Corinthians 10:31). Then there is gathered worship and the two are two sides of one coin. They can't exist without each other. You are living life for six days with life worship. I want to be a Christian husband who is worshipping God because I'm loving my wife as Christ would love the church. I want to be a Christian wife where I submit to my husband as unto the Lord. It's an act of worship before the Lord. I want to be an employer of worship. I want to honor God's work in my life with worship. I want to do my work heartily as unto the Lord. I want to speak in life to give grace to those who hear that they might hear the voice of the Lord. We just sang the song that said "Let the earth hear Your voice..." The earth is you, the way we speak, live and act for the Lord and then the Lord speaks through us. All of life is worship.

Then I come out of six days of worship and God's people assemble. It is the Ekklesia, the gathered ones of God's people. His church assembles and I come with Her to gathered worship and it refreshes me from the challenges of life worship. Then it sends me out back into life worship when I scatter. I worship the Lord by evangelizing, by encouraging others, through deeds of mercy, with hospitality, by discipling someone and I am worshipping the Lord in life. Then I come back to be refreshed and renewed as I come with God's people to praise His holy Name. Landing today ought to be like landing on the aircraft carrier, I'm getting refueled, getting coffee and now it's time to take off. Let's go. We're going back out there again. Let's praise the Lord with our lives.

In this study we're on journey marker 5 but before I briefly review markers 1 through 4 I'd like us put this fifth marker in our mind. We have asked the questions Why worship, Who we worship, How we worship and What we worship and in this study we're asking Where do we worship. That's not an unbiblical question. Earlier in our service we read a passage concerning the fourth plague where God is setting His people free. Why does God set His people free from bondage? It is so that they can go to the Mountain of God to worship, right? Why did God set you free from your sin? It was so that you might worship to the praise of the glory of His grace. Why is God striking down Pharaoh? It is to set His people free to praise Him. Why does God strike down Satan, sin and death through Jesus Christ? It is to set you free that you might live a life to praise His Name and gather with His people to praise His Name. Pharaoh was getting the idea by the time the fourth plague got there but he still wasn't willing to let go so he says "I'll let you all worship and here's a nice little place." Moses answered "No, we can't worship in the land. Egypt will not define or contain our worship. We must worship God just as He tells us."

God tells us how and that's through the splendor of holiness. God tells us where and that's in His presence. It is in His promised, redeeming presence. It's not just in His presence because the earth is filled with the presence of the Lord but it's in His promised, redeeming presence. Moses tells Pharaoh "It's not here but God told us to go there." Then as you go through the Old Testament, every time God made His presence known we call those Christophanies – pre-incarnate appearances of Christ. This is usually denoted by the phrase, 'the angel of the Lord.' In the very next moments after the Lord made His presence known, the patriarchs would build an altar and worship for this was the place of the Lord. They worshipped in the place of the presence of God.

Then you get to the New Testament and one stunning, exhilarating, wonderful example was the encounter Jesus had with the woman at the well. She comes to the well

and Jesus says “Give Me a drink” and she says “Why are you asking me for a drink? I’m a woman, you’re a man, I’m a Samaritan, you’re a Jew.” Jesus said “If you asked Me for water, I’d give you water and I have a well you don’t have to come back to. I have a well that will be springing up within you.” She said “I know the Messiah is coming and sir I perceive You’re a prophet after what you just told me about my past husbands but let me ask you a question. Where should we worship? Our fathers say we are to worship at this mountain and your fathers say we have to go to Jerusalem to the temple. So where do we worship?” Jesus says to her “Woman, an hour is coming and now it when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth for such worshippers the Father seeks who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth.”

Basically Jesus is saying to her “Woman there is coming a time when your question is not answered by a place. In fact it has already come where the answer is not this mountain or Jerusalem and that’s where salvation comes from.” But there’s a new statement of the presence of God. I don’t have time to review all of where we’ve been in this series but you can certainly go to our website and get the audios or transcripts of them all.

With marker number 1 we have learned why we worship. We were made to worship, saved to worship and God’s providence sustains us to worship. Acceptable worship of the Triune God of glory is the culmination, the occupation and the affirmation of a Gospel saturated life. We worship because it is important. There are all kinds of blessings to worship but we don’t worship for the blessings. We worship because worship is important and God ought to be praised. He deserves and is worthy of our praise.

Marker number 2 was who we worship. Acceptable worship is first and foremost unalterable committed to one Object and consumed with one Subject – the Triune God of glory. God is the unique subject and object of all of our worship. We worship the Triune God – the Father, through the Son in the Spirit by the power of the Spirit through the Son we give the Father praise. God is to be worshipped and it is a unique privilege we have to give unto Him. God is the infinite Creator, the boundless Circumference, the unfathomable Substance, and the endless Summation as the object and subject of our worship.

Marker 3 was how we worship. Acceptable worship of the Triune God of glory is a unique and sacred act of adoration by God’s people adorned in the saving beauty of the Gospel of Christ. Worship ought to be unique. We sing but this should not be a rock concert. We give praise to the Lord but this isn’t a cheerleading time. It’s a very unique time and moment in which God’s people worship Him with reverence and joy, married together in the splendor of holiness. It should be incomparable to the world’s offerings. It’s something that’s uniquely different and it’s all orchestrated in one direction and that is to the One true and living God. Worship is more than a verb, it is not an intransitive verb but a transitive verb. It demands an object. You don’t worship, worship. You don’t worship the blessings. We worship God. It demands the Object, God that we worship Him.

Marker 4 is what we do in worship. We do what God commands. Acceptable worship of the Triune God of glory is intentionally composed by God Himself with the elements He has composed and revealed in His Word. There are multiple expressions – singing, dancing, and speaking. There are all kinds of expressions of worship but He

gives us the elements of worship which is everything we do from the invocation to the benediction which is expressly commanded in God's Word, every piece of the worship that's being done.

So where do we worship? In I Peter 2 we have this New Covenant presence of God. I Peter 2:4-5 says [4] *As you come to him* (these are Christians who come to Christ), *a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious*, [5] *you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*. Why did God build us as a house of God? Why does God make us living stones a temple for His inhabitation? As we come together He inhabits His people. Why does He rise to His rest? Why does He come among His people? It is so that we will offer spiritual sacrifices and that we worship in a way that is acceptable (not to you) to God. When we leave here today the issue isn't whether worship pleased you. The issue today is did I and we please God?

Was there warrant to sing the songs we just sang? The very first song we sang said "We your temple..." We - all together - your temple is singular. Did we sing something right? Then we sang personally "Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary (temple)" where I'll lay aside all idolatry, false worship and worship You. Here is my life. I lay down the other. I now worship you. Have we sung what is Biblical in terms of where we're to worship? Where do you worship? You worship in the promised presence of God. Let me walk you through this.

In the Old Covenant, God's promised presence after the Theophanies was at a place, a tabernacle that they went through in the wilderness. God poured out His glory in the holy of holies, in the tent of meeting, in the tabernacle. When they brought the Ark of the Covenant that contained the Word of God, there God's Holy Spirit was poured out, the Shekinah, the unmatched glory of God, came into that tabernacle that they carried into the wilderness into the Promised Land. Then at a place called Araunah's threshing floor or Mount Moriah where Abraham offered up Isaac but God appeared by providing a ram and at that very same place, Araunah's threshing floor for David, the place where Abraham sacrificed, Mount Moriah, Solomon built the temple that God designed. It was glorious. It was majestic. It was complexity in worship. It was sacrifices. It was glory. It was majestic in its beauty and all of its adornment. There was Solomon's temple that they were to come into and come before to worship God and give Him praise. When they brought the Ark of the Covenant in, the glory of the Lord in II Chronicles fills that temple to His praise. Then it's destroyed by the Babylonians as God said it would if His people brought idolatry into His temple which is what they did.

Then He took them off into exile for 70 years and then brought them back. He then designed another temple. It was Zerubbabel's temple that didn't match Solomon's temple for the people said "Oh this temple doesn't match up to Solomon's temple" but Haggai says "This temple you're looking at, its glory will surpass the glory of Solomon's temple." How could that be possible for it's a mere penance in comparison? Here's how. All of those temples, like everything else in the Old Testament is fulfilled and pointing to Jesus.

Let's look at John 1:14. I do need to make an explanation here. The word worship is actually a verb, a transitive verb coming from nouns and adjectives – worth ship which became worship, as the noun turned into a verb. We are doing that all the

time and it happens in John 1:14 which says [14] *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among (tabernacled) us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Before I come back to that verse I want to go back to nouns and verbs. The word temple is a noun. In John 1:14 temple (or tabernacle) is turned into a verb. There was a time in my life when the word friend was a noun and on Facebook it has now become a verb, when someone says “I want to friend you.” The word wall used to be a noun and now it’s a verb when someone says “I just walled you on your Facebook.” So here we take nouns and turn them into verbs. There is also one that says “I want to impact you” which is one that has been turned into a verb. It wasn’t a verb before but now it has become one.

The writer, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit does the same thing. He takes the word temple or tabernacle and has turned it into a verb where it is translated in the Bible as ‘dwelt among.’ So John 1:14 says [14] *And the Word (Jesus) became flesh and templed, tabernacle, dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son (not measured, without measure) from the Father, full of grace and truth.* So as the Son of God has come among us, in that incarnate body, that Christ is the fulfillment of all those Theophanies and temples in the Old Testament. When did the glory fill the temple in the Old Testament? It was when the Spirit of God and the Word of God came to it. Here is the Word infleshed and the Spirit of God without measure is upon Him. He is full of grace and truth.

The hour is coming and woman, standing right in front of you, those places all pointed to Me. Here is the glory of the Lord. What were the prophets talking about? What was Haggai talking about? Why would Zerubbabel’s temple be more glorious in the glory of the Lord? It is because there were going to be almost two forgotten people named Mary and Joseph. She would give birth to the Son of God and they were going to take Jesus Christ, the Son of God, full of grace and truth, glorious into that temple. When they walked into what was left of Zerubbabel’s temple, now refashioned by Herod, the glory of the Lord unmatched and unmeasured had now come to the temple, for Christ had come to the temple.

When He is lifted up at the Mount of Transfiguration there is Peter, James, and John, Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets point to Him and as He is lifted up in glory Peter overwhelmed says “Let’s build a temple, a shrine for that’s what my patriarchs would have done.” God says “No more temples, no more shrines for they all pointed to this. This is My Son. Hear Him.” Here God has come among us. It is not a religion that tells you what you have to give and do to get to God, but it’s a God who gave His Son that came to do for you what you could not do for yourself that you could everlasting life. Now God has come in the flesh among you. Now hear Him! Worship Him! Bow before Him! Surrender to Him! Here is the fulfillment of it all.

Pastor, my Savior, that incarnate body has ascended and you’re telling me the only place to worship is in the presence of God where He dwells in His redeeming presence? That Savior who has ascended has now built three New Covenant temples. I want to give you a few more passages on this. The first is in I Corinthians 6. The risen Christ who is coming again, until He comes again, gives the New Covenant temples of worship. What are those New Covenant temples of worship?

I Corinthians 6:18-20 says [18] *Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own*

body. [19] Or do you not know that your body is a **temple of the Holy Spirit within you**, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify (worship) God in your body. The risen Savior has put His presence through the Holy Spirit in you personally. Temple number one in the New Covenant is the personal temple of every believer. They are the indwelling presence of God.

What is temple number two? Let's look at I Corinthians 3:16-17 which says [16] *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?* [17] *If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* Here is a new translation for you for this verse which is called the Southern American translation of the Bible. You may be thinking we just read this from chapter 6 about our bodies being the temple but that's not what this is talking about. This isn't talking about your personal body but the local church. How do you know this is talking about the local church? The Ekklesia, the gathered church is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

If a Southerner had translated this verse it would have said [16] *Do ya'll not know that all ya'll are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?* The *you* is plural. If He is talking about your body then temple would have to be plural – ya'll are God's temples but He says “ya'll (plural) are God's temple (singular)” so when the local church gathers or when two or three gather together in My Name, I'm there in their midst (Matthew 18:20). We sung earlier, we your temple so not only individually am I sanctuary but when we assemble that is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The third temple is the church universal. Let's look at Ephesians 2 and then I'll give you the takeaway in closing. Ephesians 2:19-22 says [19] *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.* So what is He saying? Basically He's saying, I don't care if you're a Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, black or white or if you're church is governed in a baptistic form or in a Presbyterian form, if that church is confessing Christ, faithful to God's Word and those believers are confessing Christ and filled with the Spirit, all of you together, His church universal, He is indwelling His people. I am indwelling them so that I might be present in their midst.

So the New Covenant temples are the Christian, the gathered church (local) and the church universal. Therefore where do I worship? I worship wherever God takes me as a believer and I only go in life to worship. We would have never called this building a church. Someone called me once and said “Where is your church?” I said “I don't know.” She said “What do you mean you don't know? I was going to come visit this Sunday and how can I visit a church where the preacher doesn't know where it is?” I said “Oh you mean, where does my church meet. The church I pastor meets at 2200 Briarwood Way. They may not help you much but that's where we meet.” My church can be on an airplane, at schools, hospitals, I don't know where it is. We're going to gather together and praise our God. I'm grateful for every thought that went into a sanctuary to enhance, instruct and remove obstacles to worship but if a tornado comes through here tomorrow (this isn't a prophecy) and this building is destroyed, Briarwood will meet next week. We used to call these buildings the meeting places. It's where the

church met. It's where the temple assembled, the Ekklesia, the gathered ones. That's why you don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together as is the habit of some but you draw together all the more as you see the day of the Lord approaching (Hebrews 10:25).

So what is this? Here is marker number five. Where? It is in the New Covenant. Acceptable worship of the Triune God of glory is given only in the promised presence of the Lord. Why? The Lord is in His Temple. So where is that? Here is the explanation. The temple of the Lord in the New Covenant is no longer a place for His people to go but His people. The temple is His people wherever they go for Him and whenever they assemble in Him. As they assemble it is the local church. As they live they are temples of the Holy Spirit. As they assemble they are a temple of the Holy Spirit.

So what did we just learn? I love to tell people this. I'll see you and I'm going to do something the Lord never does. Do you know what that is? I'll leave you but He doesn't. He is going with you. He is going to be in His temple. He is going to be in you, dwelling in you. So when you leave here, whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. I want to flee idolatria. The Greek word for worship is *latria*. I want to flee fictitious worship. With my life I want to commit worship. I want to worship as a husband the way I love my wife. With every piece of my life I want to be an act of worship.

I'm somewhere between zero and 100 percent in my Christian life. I'm afraid to grade but here has been a great key for me. I not only flee idolatry, whether its sexual immorality, gluttony, self adulation or whatever it is, the best thing for me to do is not just simply to flee but to pursue the worship of God in life. Here is the prayer I make every morning before I get out of bed, "God, thank You for saving me, I did not deserve it. I have been saved by Your grace. God, this day let me worship You." That means I don't have room, God willing, if I'm going to fill the temple with Him, I don't have room for the idols.

Do you know what the two biggest mistakes that God's people made in the Old Covenant? Number one they would neglect worship. When you read the book of Nehemiah you see that for thirteen years they forgot to gather at the Feast of Booths. For hundreds of year they had forgotten it before. We look at that and say 'how could they forget that?' Many of us put the gathered worship of God as a secondary objective on Sunday. We neglect worship. The Bible says "Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together." I need, I'm called, I want, God deserves the gathered worship of His temple. It is so easy for me to neglect life worship as the temple of the Holy Spirit and gathered worship because I have this old man in me that keeps wanting to say it's really all about me. It's okay to have Jesus as long as it's still about me. So they neglected worship and didn't make it a priority.

The second problem they had in the Old Covenant was they tried to mix *idolatria* (idolatry) with *latria*. You would go into the temple and find Molech in the temple of the Lord. You would find Baal in the temple of the Lord. You would even find at the conclusion of the days of Solomon, reinstating child sacrifice of Molech. That's why God brought judgment and destroyed it all. We look at that and think 'I can't believe they did that.' What are you bringing into your temple, into His temple, you?

This is not mere manners. I thank God for the elders and pastors of this church who for forty years said "We aren't perfect but we're going to be purposeful and whether

it's the worship of evangelism, missions, discipleship or whatever, we'll do our best not to allow Satan to insinuate idolatry into this church's life." For God's glory Briarwood is committed to worshipping God and to reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ. I only ask God that it would continue, grow and that it would be blessed of the Lord. God, don't let me neglect personal worship. Don't let me neglect gathered worship. I could say don't let me neglect it because of all of the blessings but I don't want to neglect it because You should have praise that comes from Your temple.

The Lord is in His temple. Let all the earth keep silent but let the people of God from the temple, praise His Name forever. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. O God, our God, thank You so much that we don't have to go to Jerusalem or a certain place but we are Your temple. Prepare us to be a sanctuary and we gathered are a temple of the Holy Spirit. I want to thank You again for this kind gift of this structure that enhances, directs and reflects what we think is important about worship but I want to thank You that Your temple are these Your people who have gathered. Now here You are in their midst. The world is silent. It is only giving fictitious worship to idols but God we would worship You. Please God don't let us get the idols into the worship of our lives or into the gathered worship. Those idols bring death, the death of the idolatry of sexual anarchy, the death of gluttony, of drunkenness, of power, of consumerism, of oppressive-ism, whatever it is God, help us not to bring any of those idols into Your temple but allow us to flee sin, put on Christ and praise Your Holy Name, for Christ's Sake, Amen.