

♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 4, Number 6 ♪ June 2009

THEME: New Testament Worship Pt. 3

KEY THEMES IN NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP (Part 3)

In [Worship Notes 4.3](#) and [4.5](#) we examined two central topics of New Testament worship: respectively, the new and unique **access** which believers have into the very presence of God through our High Priest and Mediator Jesus Christ, and the emphasis given to the **inward nature** of worship as opposed to outward forms.

This month we turn to another crucial distinctive of New Covenant worship.

3. WHOLE LIFE WORSHIP

In Jesus' pivotal teaching on worship in John 4 (see [Worship Notes 3.9](#)), he decisively fixed the locus of true worship as "*in spirit and truth*," and away from a sense of geographical location ("*neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem*," 4:21).

The Apostle Paul appears to be building on the Lord's declaration and making a logical application of its sense when he declares in Romans 12:1 (another pivotal passage on worship in the New Testament) that our appropriate response ("Therefore") to God for all that he has done for us and given to us in Christ ("by the mercies of God," as detailed in the first 11 chapters of the epistle) is "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiri-

tual worship." In other words, since worship is not to be limited by time or place (as Jesus declares), it should be all-pervasive. Paul's use of the word "bodies" obviously does not speak merely to external practices of worship (anymore than presenting them as a "sacrifice" refers to a blood offering), for he has plenty to say about the inner nature of worship elsewhere in his writings; rather it speaks of the whole self.

This is what is asked of us by God, who has given us everything: *our whole lives* in grateful response to his magnificent grace. As Paul expressed elsewhere: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:19-20). This is of course perfectly consistent with Jesus' call to true discipleship:

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matt 13:44-46)

"For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" (Luke 9:25).

"Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:62).

Paul writes, “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). For the believer, there is no secular place or pursuit, no separation of life into religious and non-religious areas. As quoted last month, Don Carson notes that, in the internalization and broadening of worship from the focus on external places and forms that characterized the Old Covenant, “the language of the cultus [i.e., the Mosaic system] has been transmuted to all of life, with the implication, not so much of a desacralization of space and time and food, as with a sacralization of all space and all time and all food” (*Worship by the Book*, 40).

The implications of this truth are profound for individual believers. It means that each one of us is responsible for a daily walk of worship that allows the presence and influence of God to pervade all of our activities and projects and thoughts and dealings with others. We are “to do all to the glory of God” by living for him and in his power in all we do. Worship is not to be confined to a morning quiet time or to a Sunday morning gathering.

The implications are no less profound for pastors and worship leaders. For it means that such leaders are not simply purveyors of professional services in the area of worship; not just suppliers of worship for the people under their charge; not sole distributors providing an otherwise unobtainable product.

Worship is the offering to God of our whole being as an appropriate response to gracious gift of salvation

They are simply to be *facilitators* of a corporate event that builds upon, rather than replaces, the individual worship walks of the people. It is simply not fair to place on the shoulders of church leaders the responsibility for “providing worship” for the people of God (still less for “leading them into the presence of God”). Every New Covenant believer has the privilege and opportunity of direct access to God’s presence; this was an important emphasis of the Reformation (the “priesthood of all believers”) after the Medieval church had reverted to the Old Testament pattern of a special priestly class as mediating (and barring) access to God. At the climactic point in his letter (10:19-22, beginning with “Therefore”), the writer of Hebrews encourages us to take full advantage of the full and free (and daily) access we have to the Father through Christ.

This does not at all downplay the importance of corporate worship, but it does put a lot of the onus for its “success” on the shoulders of each individual participant. A more relevant question than “What did I get out of the service today?” might well be “What did I *bring* to the service today?”! It is when believers come, not with an empty tank that they hope will be filled, but with hearts brimming with gratitude and devotion from a week of walking with and worshiping God, that our corporate worship can become, by the Spirit’s enablement, something truly powerful and more than the sum of its (human and structural) parts.

See another treatment of this theme in [Worship Notes 1.10.](#)

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)

QUOTABLES

A Life and Lifestyle of Worship

“[Paul’s] burden is to call for a radical, inward authenticity of worship and an all-encompassing pervasiveness of worship in all of life.” (John Piper, “The Inner Simplicity and Outer Freedom of Worldwide Worship,” *Let the Nations Be Glad* (rev. ed.), 221)

“Worship is not just a matter of regularly paying our dues by attending weekly rituals; it is ‘a soundtrack for the rest of life, the words and music and actions of worship inside the sanctuary playing the background as we live our lives outside, in the world,’ as Thomas Long writes in *Testimony*. Long says, ‘The words of worship are like stones thrown into the pond; they ripple outward in countless concentric circles, finding ever fresh expression in new places in our lives.’”

(Nathan Bierma, “Worshipful Service” in *Perspectives*

<http://www.perspectivesjournal.org/2006/06/essay-service.html>)

“Such ways of speaking, indeed, show how expressly and consciously the New Testament Church set its own worship apart from all merely cultic procedure (as in Jewish or heathen temples), and on the other hand how little they set their Sunday worship apart from that of the rest of the week. All ceremonial ordering of worship which places it in contrast with workaday life is accordingly to be shunned.”

(Eduard Schweizer, “Worship in the New Testament,” *Reformed and Presbyterian World* 24:5 [March 1957]:196-97)

“Take me, body and soul, and make me the instrument of your glory in the world. Let the renewal You are working from within show on the outside. This is my spiritual worship. To show the world that You are my all-

satisfying treasure. . . . ‘Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven.’ (Matt. 5:16) All of life is the outshining of what you truly value and cherish and treasure. Therefore all of life is worship. Either of God, or of something else.”

(John Piper, “All of Life as Worship” [Romans 12:1-2], sermon November 30, 1997)

“Present your bodies as living sacrifices which is your reasonable service of worship” (Romans 12:1). That’s all the time and everywhere. “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31) All the time, everywhere.”

(John Piper, “Our High Priest is The Son of God Perfect Forever,” sermon December 8, 1996)

“Accordingly all our life is a festival: being persuaded that God is everywhere present on all sides, we praise him as we till the ground, we sing hymns; as we sail the sea, we feel his inspiration in all that we do.”

(Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*)

“If ‘there is no longer any “cultus” in the ancient sense,’ it is equally true, conversely, that all life has become ‘cultus’ in a new sense. Life has no other purpose than to be rendered up to God in adoration and gratitude.”

(David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, 203 [citing C.F.D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament*])

“Mouthing hymns and psalms and prayers in church is of no particular value unless it is a distillation of the attitude of the rest of our lives.”

(John Stott, “Worship,” sermon at <http://www.sbts.edu/icw>)

“God is after a life of worship for each one of us. It’s what Paul calls our ‘service of worship’—presenting ourselves to Him continually as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), transformed in our thinking and awake to His will in the world (Rom. 12:2). Unfortunately we tend to turn this service of worship (which takes up our whole life) into a worship service (which takes up about an hour a week). It puts a lot of weight to bear on 30 minutes of music if that will be a person’s sole worship experience for the week. No wonder people are fighting so hard for their music.”

(John Fischer, “What to Do about the Worship Wars,” *Moody* [July/August 2002], http://www.moodymagazine.com/articles.php?action=view_article&id=95)

“If you do not know the presence of God in your office, your factory, your home, then God is not in the church when you attend. .

. . It is my experience that our total lives, our entire attitude as persons, must be toward the worship of God.”

(A. W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened To Worship?*)

“‘Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God’ (2 Cor. 7:1). Paul uses transformed cultic language to indicate that a sanctified lifestyle is the ‘worship’ appropriate to the new temple.”

(David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, 203)

“Have your heart right with Christ, and He will visit you often, and so turn weekdays into Sundays, meals into sacraments, homes into temples and earth into heaven.”

(Charles Haddon Spurgeon)

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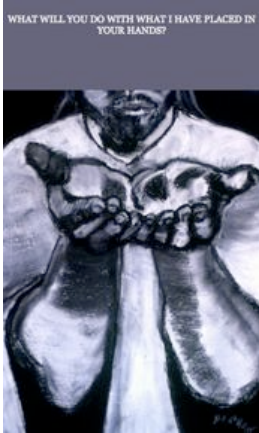
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COMING NEXT MONTH:

New Testament Worship, Part 4 (final installment)



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