

## COVENANT PRES NEWCOMERS' CLASS

### #4 – Worship

Opening Question: What is the purpose and destiny of human beings?

- To worship God!

»A couple points:

- A. Worship is centered on God and for God. Only when this is the case does it also nourish the worshipper
- B. If our hearts are not in it, we can kill the liturgy, but rarely does the liturgy dampen the lover of God with his heart truly set on worship
  - *think what a “flat liturgy” the OT practices were, yet God fully expected engaged hearts*
- C. We were created to worship. So, if we don't worship the Creator, we will worship the creature (Rom. 1:23, 25). We are all worshippers (e.g., watch any Seahawks football game).

I. Worship is for God -- Ps 95: 1-7

A. It only makes sense

*Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.<sup>2</sup> Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.<sup>3</sup> For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods.<sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.<sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.<sup>6</sup> Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;<sup>7</sup> for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.*

- » The natural response to the nature and being of God, and our relative place before Him, is bowing down in worship
  - Hab 2:20 & *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* -- homage, respect, reverence, worship
  - God is to be worshipped for who he is (Rev. 4:8), as the Creator (Rev. 4:11), and for His redemption in Christ (Rev. 5:9-12).
- » “All true worship is to be expressed in a Trinitarian context” (Sinclair Ferguson)
  - Much of contemporary evangelical worship focuses exclusively on Jesus.
  - Biblical worship is to the Father through Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, each divine person can also be worshipped.

B. All of life is worship, but the public worship of God's people is the thing Scripture covers in such detail

1. All of life is worship -- Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor 10:31
  - so crucial to remember this
2. Public worship is central to the identity of God's people
  - a. The Tabernacle (Exodus 25-30); the Temple (1 Ki 5-8)
  - b. It was Jesus' and Paul's custom -- Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2
  - c. So with the early church -- Acts 2:42
  - d. So with post-NT church once persecution lifts
    - even if it meant the conversion of pagan temples

C. Worship is not, then, entertainment, "seeker sensitivity", looking to have our needs met rather than coming to offer "sacrifices of praise"

1. It is a unique place, a unique culture with an identity separate from, and sometimes contrary to, the world -- Ps 73:17
  - Frederica Matthews-Green
2. It is God who sets requirements we long to meet -- John 4:23ff
3. As we understand the worship of heaven from John's Revelation, it is radically God-centered
4. The great danger in a culture of consumerism

## A Short Biblical Theology of Worship

### A. Cosmos as Temple

- "God does set up the cosmos so that only people will have a place. He also sets up the cosmos to serve as his *temple* in which he will find rest..." (John Walton, "Creation," in Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch)

### B. Garden of Eden as Sanctuary

- "The garden of Eden is not viewed by the author of Genesis simply as a piece of Mesopotamian farmland, but as an archetypal *sanctuary*, that is, a place where God dwells and where man should *worship* him" (Gordon Wenham).
- Man's task in the Garden is to "work it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). When used together, these two verbs are linked to the work and service of priests in the tabernacle and temple (Num. 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:5-6). Adam's work was priestly in nature. "The man is appointed first and foremost as a guardian of sacred space; he was not created simply to be a gardener" (Alexander,

### C. Promise of God Dwelling Among His People

- The Bible begins with the the Lord walking with Adam and Eve in the Garden (Gen. 3:8).

- God's covenant promise: "I will make my dwelling among you... And *I will walk* among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people (Lev. 26:11-12).
- See also Ex. 6:7; 29:45; Jer 7:23; 24:7; 30:22; Ezek and in the N.T., 2 Cor 6:16;
- God dwelt among his people in the tabernacle in the wilderness.
  - "I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God" (Ex. 29:45; cf. 40:34-38)
  - A tabernacle for worship (the place where sacrifices were offered)
  - The tabernacle is a second Eden (Ge. 3:24; Exod 25:18-22)
- God dwelt among his people in the Jerusalem Temple.
  - "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built" (1 Kings 8:27).
- Jesus "tabernacled" with his people.
  - "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us." "Dwelt" means "pitched his tent" or "tabernacled." Recalls Israel's tabernacle where God dwelt in their midst.
- Believers are now the temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16)
  - The Holy Spirit now indwells God's people (1 Cor 6: 19)
  - Believers are a "spiritual house" and a "holy priesthood" and offer "spiritual sacrifices to God" (1 Pet 2:5).
- The Biblical story ends with God dwelling with his People
  - "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (Rev. 21: 3).
  - "...the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it (the new Jerusalem) and *his servants will worship him*" (Rev. 22: 3).

## COVENANT PRES NEWCOMERS' CLASS

### #4 -- Worship (part two)

» Two points (last time point A):

A. Worship is centered on God and for God. Only when this is the case does it also nourish the worshipper

B. If our hearts are not in it, we can kill the liturgy, but rarely does the liturgy dampen the lover of God with his heart truly set on worship

B. This time: The liturgy

1. The regulative principle: what is permissible in worship is that which has the positive sanction of God's word. (John 4:23 -- truth is the Word)

[See Maxwell handout]

a. Worship must take some form; our prayers, praises, petitions, confessions, sacraments, offerings, testimonies, vows, hearing of the Word are organized in a way that is, as best we judge, biblical and sensible

b. Even the non-liturgical have a liturgy of some sort. Better to be purposeful about it

2. They liturgy does not kill worship. Cold hearts kill worship

a. Isa 1:10-17

b. this being true, many churches are making a mistake in this era, trying to make worship appeal to the flesh. Appeal is not the problem -- rather, the heart of the worshipper

c. Lewis from *Letters to Malcolm*, p. 5-6

» Our watch words: *Coram Deo & Sursum Corda*

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why does the Bible give so much attention to worship?
- 2) What are some ways in which all of life is worship?
- 3) How can we cultivate hearts and minds ready to worship?
- 4) How can we avoid worship that is seeker sensitive?