

Worth-War

The war is over worship. The war for your soul is tied directly to worship and it began like this –

*How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!*

How you are cut down to the ground,

*You who weakened the nations!
For you have said in your heart:*

*'I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the*

stars of God;

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation

On the farthest sides of the north;

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,

I will be like the Most High.'

Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,

To the lowest depths of the Pit.
(Isaiah 14:12 – 14)

You see, at some point Lucifer decided that he deserved or desired to “be like the Most High”. Ezekiel, speaking for the Lord, wrote of him -

*You were the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*

You were in Eden, the garden of God;

Every precious stone was your covering:

The sardius, topaz, and diamond,

*Beryl, onyx, and jasper,
Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.*

The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes

Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

You were the anointed cherub

who covers;

I established you;

You were on the holy mountain of God;

You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created,

Till iniquity was found in you.

(Eze 28:11 – 15)

Now, being like the Most High is something we ourselves desire and look forward to, but the likeness issue is quite different. As God's children, saved by faith in Jesus, we desire to be more godly in character and one day we indeed will actually look like Christ, (1 John 3:2) but we are instructed to always seek the “low seat”. Jesus said, “*I am meek and lowly...*” (Mat 11:29) Lucifer, on the other hand, wanted the ‘high seat’, in fact he sought a seat like the Most High. What this speaks of is his insane desire to be worshipped like God. He even proposed this to Jesus.

...the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” (Mat 4:8,9)

Thus the war of the spirit, the war over and in man, could be said to be fundamentally all about worship. Who will receive it? In order to understand why this is so we must understand what worship is all about.

John R. W. Stott once said, “*Christians believe that true worship is the highest and noblest activity of which man, by the grace of God, is capable.*” Yet Dr. James Boice adds, “*... at the same time, it*

highlights what is perhaps the greatest shortcoming of the Evangelical church in America today, and that is that for large segments of the church, indeed the majority of churches, true worship is non-existent. The sad reality is that in our day Christians have forgotten what true worship is and many churches have abandoned it entirely.”

A.W. Tozer wrote, “*Thanks to our splendid Bible societies and to other effective agencies for the dissemination of the Word, there are today many millions of people who hold ‘right opinions’, probably more than ever before in the history of the church. Yet I wonder if there was ever a time when true spiritual worship was at a lower ebb. To great sections of the church the art of worship has been lost entirely, and in its place has come that strange and foreign thing called the ‘program’.*”

In examining the history of the English word, we understand ‘worship’ to be equally spoken as ‘worth-ship’. In New Testament Greek, it is ‘proskenuo’ which means ‘turn and kiss’. It implies turning away from ourselves and turning toward our Lord in an intimate and affectionate way. It implies an emotional expression of love. Whereas, the Old Testament Hebrew word for worship -- ‘shachah’ -- means to bow down. So the first thing we know about worship is that it means to attribute worth, to worship God is to ascribe to Him ultimate worth and thus we honor Him.

The second thing we can assert is that true worship has bearing upon

the worshipper. Of worshipping God, William Temple the former Archbishop of Canterbury wrote, “*To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.*”

Clearly, worship is something far beyond the singing of songs or the periodic gathering of sincere believers. It engages and captivates the worshipper in every aspect of life. To worship God fundamentally requires intellect that discerns the qualities of the One being worshipped. As a young Christian, I used to think when I read of the four living creatures in Revelation worshipping God with, “*Holy, Holy, Holy*” each time they see Him as rote and simply a matter of obligatory respect. I couldn't have been more wrong. You can note that these four creatures are those closest to the throne of God and thus are extremely high beings if I can put it that way. They also are described as being full of eyes – all seeing and thus extremely intelligent.

The reason they are continually worshipping is not because it's obligatory, but rather because it is the natural response of the perceptive, redeemed, living soul to the attributes of God. The more one truly ‘sees’ God for who He is, the more sincere worship will erupt responsively to Him.

Boice pointed out three reasons why this age of the church has missed it. He wrote:

1. *Ours is a trivial age, and the church has been affected by this pervasive triviality.* It is a technological age, and the ultimate objective of our popular technological culture is entertainment. The average American household has the television on more than seven hours a day. *“How can people whose mind are filled with the brainless babble of the evening sitcoms have anything but trivial thoughts when they come to God’s house on Sunday morning, if, in fact, they have thoughts of God at all? How can they appreciate His holiness if their heads are full of the moral muck of the afternoon talk shows? They cannot. So all they look for in church, if they look for anything, is something to make them feel good for a short while...”*

2. *Ours is a self absorbed, man-centered age, and the church has become, sadly, even treasonously self-centered.* Pastor R. Kent Hughes observed, *“The unspoken but increasingly common assumption of today’s Christendom is that worship is primarily for us—to meet our needs. Such worship services are entertainment focused, and the worshipers are uncommitted spectators who are silently grading the performance. From this perspective preaching becomes a homiletics of consensus—preaching to felt needs—man’s conscious agenda instead of God’s. Such preaching is always topical and never textual. Biblical information is minimized, and the sermons are short and full of stories. Anything and everything that is suspected of making the marginal attendee uncomfortable is removed*

from the service, whether it be a registration card or a ‘mere’ creed. Taken to the nth degree, this philosophy instills a tragic self-centeredness. That is, everything is judged by how it affects man. This terribly corrupts one’s theology.”

3. *Our age is oblivious to God, and the church is barely better to judge from its so-called worship services.* The tragedy here is not that Christians in our time deny basic Bible doctrines, certainly not the nature and existence of God. They are not heretics. The problem is that although they acknowledge Bible truth, it doesn’t seem to make a difference.

Jesus said that God actually seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23).

In spirit -- *“What Jesus was teaching was that in the new age which he was inaugurating by his death and resurrection the place of worship would not matter, for a man or a woman would not worship merely by being in the right place and doing certain right things. The person would worship in his or her spirit, which could be anywhere. True worship occurs only when that part of man, his spirit, which is akin to the divine nature (for God is spirit), actually meets with God and finds itself praising God for his love, wisdom, beauty, truth, holiness, compassion, mercy, grace, power, and all his other attributes.”* (Boice)

William Barclay wrote, *“The true, the genuine worship is when man, through his spirit, attains to friendship and intimacy with God. True and genuine worship is not to come to a certain place; it is not to go through a certain ritual or liturgy; it is not even to bring certain gifts.*

True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part of man, speaks to and meets with God, who is immortal and invisible.”

In truth -- This means that we must approach God truthfully. We must come to him honestly. It is what Jesus was referring to when he said of the people of his day, *“Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’”* (Matthew 15:7-9)

According to Jesus, true worship means honesty of heart on the part of the worshipper. We must not pretend to worship. We must worship knowing that our hearts are open before God.

Meanwhile, the spiritual war over worship is on-going. Satan wants it but is completely unworthy of it. Nevertheless, from the time man began listening to him rather than God, he has prompted man to build and worship idols -- to worship anything but the true and living God. You see, true worship of God brings intimacy with and appreciation for the attributes of God, yet, the same is true in the worship of idols (Psa 115:4-8). You become very much like the one who is the focus of your sincere attention.

Why do I leave church unchanged? Mostly because the focus of my attention has been on ME. When such is the case, my worship is dishonest and directed inward rather than ‘upward’. Becoming more like me doesn’t help me at all.

Essentially, we ‘worship’ all day long because we are constantly directing our attention toward that which we esteem most worthy of it. The last thing Satan wants is a bunch of ‘little Christs’ infecting the world with light and life – the world he has worked so hard to destroy and rule in fear and darkness.

His ploy is to direct your attention elsewhere – anywhere but the Lord. The more successful he is at that, the less you direct your attention toward God, i.e., the less you worship and connect with Him. And as a consequence, the less you resemble Him.

This is exactly why the scripture says to *“set your affection on things above”* and *“whatsoever things are true...noble...just...pure...lovely...of good report; if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”*

Now, you cannot control the distractions but you can decide upon what you will direct your attention. Today’s entertainment culture is frankly a grand scheme hatched by a spiritual enemy to direct your worship anywhere away from our holy God.

You may think that’s extreme and it is – it’s extremely true. Nothing would please your heavenly Father more than if you thought of Him ALL the time. That’s because it would bless you as well and transform you.

Yes, it is a war and you are called to participate – victim or victor – your choice. Who/what will you worship? Who/what will you resemble? Worship God through Christ, in spirit and in truth! Selah!