

Worship 1 - God, The Object

(Number one in a series of ten)

"The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written,

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:8-10).

Man does not need to be told to worship. It is his nature to do so. He will worship something or someone. Even those who seek to live a life void of God and deny any need to worship are actually worshipping self when they do so. However, man does need to be taught WHO to worship. This is not something one knows by nature. In fact, the "ignorant" worship of Acts 17:23 and John 4:23 was a failure to identify the correct object of worship. The words of Jesus in our opening text forever settle any discussion on the matter of who is to be the recipient of our worship. He said, "WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD."

WORSHIP OF ANGELS

Angels have been the recipients of man's worship. I doubt not that there are still those who would direct their worship toward those spiritual servants of the Heavenly Father. However, the worship of angels is forbidden. The worshipping of angels mentioned in Colossians 2:18 comes from denying "the Head" (verse 19) and is "will worship" (verse 23) rather than true worship. Revelation 22:8-9 informs us of the occasion when John "fell down to worship before the feet of the angel" and the angel refused him saying, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." This reveals to us that angels do not wish to be the recipients of man's worship, they reject it. Do not seek to worship angels, the Bible forbids it.

WORSHIP OF MEN

At the fifth Lateran Council, AD 1512, Christopher Marcellus declared, "Thou art the shepherd, thou art the physician, thou art the director, thou art the husbandman, finally thou art another God on earth." Cardinal Du Perron said; "As there is only one God in heaven, so there ought to be a God on earth. All Christians, therefore, should look upon the Pope as God himself." These men would have us worshipping a man, which the Bible forbids us to do. Cornelius fell down at the feet of Peter, "and worshipped him." But Peter refused that worship saying, "Stand up. I myself am also a man" (Acts 10:25-26). This attitude every man should have. None of us are worthy of worship. When the people of Lystra saw Paul's power to heal (his credentials as an apostle, 2 Corinthians 12:12), they said, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (Acts 14:11). They wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas. However, Paul responded to this by saying, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (Acts 14:15).

The teachings of the Latter Day Saints' that God is an exalted man and that we can be gods is another form of the worship of man. Joseph Smith said, "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man" (Teachings, page 345). In Gospel Principles, published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1986, pages 289-290, the writer declared: "Exaltation is eternal life, the kind of life that God lives. We can become Gods like our Heavenly Father. Those who live the commandments of the Lord receive eternal life (exaltation) in the celestial

kingdom...will become gods." This is similar to Satan's statement in Genesis 3:5 "...ye shall be as gods." Whether it is gods becoming men or men becoming gods, the whole thought is contrary to truth. Do not worship men, the Bible forbids it.

WORSHIP OF THINGS

"Flee from idolatry" is the message of the Bible as seen in I Corinthians 10:14. Yet this plague upon the human race still runs rampant with various forms of it still being practiced by the overwhelming majority of the human race whether it be the literal bowing before carved images, ancestral worship, or the abandonment of spiritual living to gain physical things (Colossians 3:5).

The naive have a tendency to believe that in our "enlightened" world of today, idolatry is not a challenge, but it is and very strongly so. In India there are over 100,000 different gods of human imagination and manufacture that are worshipped with great devotion. The Bible speaks of such in this way: "They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat" (Psalms 115:5-7). Does this not also describe the statues of Mary, Joseph, the Saints, etc.? Is there really any difference? Are they not equally condemned as idolatry? Do not worship idols, the Bible forbids it.

WORSHIP OF SELF

This is not as absurd as it may seem at first glance. Those who "go to church" for its entertainment value are actually putting self first. They are the ones who will go elsewhere if it seems they are not "getting anything out of worship." They have not the slightest idea that worship is dependent upon what we put into it rather than what we get out of it. In writing about "performance worship," Eugene Jenkins pointed out that "Acceptable worship involves submission to certain prescribed acts. We are to pour out our souls in adoration of deity. So, when men, in their worship, seek to direct attention to themselves, instead of God, they seriously err. This is exactly what 'performance worship' is doing. This is true whether it involves choirs, soloists, drama groups, or other like entertainment." This "performance worship," even if it is seeking to teach by entertaining, is self worship because it is directed at people rather than God. God has not authorized "performance worship." Do not seek to worship self, the Bible forbids it.

WORSHIP GOD

We remind you of our opening text which informs us that the God of heaven, our Heavenly Father, is to be the only recipient of our worship. "Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalms 29:2). "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy" (Psalms 99:5).

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