

Lesson 11

"Worship: In Spirit and in Truth"

Go to any cathedral in America or Europe and you will see idolatry on display--for example, St. Patrick's (New York City), Notre Dame (Paris), or St. Paul's (London). Or go to any Protestant church with their crosses prominently displayed and their stained-glass windows objectifying sacred truths and personages of the Bible, and you will see a subtle form of idolatry. This is no different from the ancient Jews whose worship consisted of outward forms and ceremonies--a substitute for the genuine. The worship heralded by the 1888 message is the True Gospel, which rids man of his idols and restores true worship.

To "worship God in spirit and in truth" is for every idol to be cast out of the heart (paganism). It is paganism to consider worshipping God at holy places, shrines, or where there are holy people, or teachers. There are no "holy" places or holy "teachers."

Paganism is the idol of "self-love" enshrined in every natural-born sinner's heart. The gospel of Jesus' cross, "the truth of the gospel," casts out *eros*, self-love [self-esteem]; and through the Holy Spirit imports *agape* which is solid truth. So, to worship God in *spirit* and in *truth* is the transformation of the human heart by the Holy Spirit who brings with Him all the truth.

This can only occur when God's people exercise "the faith of Jesus" which has been given to every man. God's people have been called to the cross to humble themselves in corporate repentance. Corporate repentance involves recognition of the hidden idolatry of self-love (self-esteem) within each human heart, which results in the outward manifestation of every darling sin and cherished idol. It is this very truth of corporate repentance, which so many resist. This resistance works backward to show resistance to the message of the cross--and unknowingly many of God's people now resist the message that was designed to draw them to the cross! The message of the cross draws us by Christ's love to repentance and forgiveness of sin.

The cross defines true worship. True worship does not include the efforts of man at all. This dynamic of the 1888 message draws the line clearly as to who saves us and who does the work. It also shows how truth makes some offended and ashamed. Ellet J. Waggoner, one of the two messengers sent by God in 1888 (Ellen White said they had "heavenly credentials"), wrote: "The offense of the cross is that the cross is a confession of human frailty and sin and of inability to do any good thing. To take the cross of Christ means to depend solely on Him for everything, and this is the abasement of all human

pride [self-esteem/self-love]. Men love to fancy themselves independent. But let the cross be preached, let it be made known that in man dwells no good thing and that all must be received as a gift, and straightway somebody is offended" (*The Glad Tidings*, p. 113).

Yet many professed Christians go on as if the cycle of day, month, and year were to continue unending. They have no sense of urgency or regard to the Day of Atonement that is upon us. A common fable that is held among them teaches that man must continue to sin while in this flesh--he can't help it, and so forgiveness is great because he sins over and over again. This is not in Spirit and in truth. This is a fable and a commandment taught by man.

Waggoner clarified this simply: "Let no professed Christian take counsel of his own imperfections and say that it is impossible for a Christian to live a sinless life. It is impossible for a true Christian, one who has full faith, to live any other kind of life. 'How can we who died to sin still live in it?' (Rom. 6:2) 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remains in Him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God' (1 John 3:9). Therefore 'abide in Him.'" (*The Glad Tidings*, p. 42).

"That which is destroyed is the body of sin, and it is destroyed only by this personal presence of the life of Christ. ... It is destroyed for everybody, for Christ in His own flesh has abolished 'the enmity,' the sinner's carnal mind. Our sins, our weaknesses, were upon Him. ... We have only to accept the victory, which Christ has won. The victory over all sin is already a reality" (ibid., p. 43).

To the woman at the well (John 4:22) Jesus said, "salvation is of the Jews" and Jesus knows what true worship is. He said, "we know what we worship" (vs. 22). Then He made it plain: "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in *spirit* and in *truth*: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth*" (John 4:23, 24).

The 1888 good news of God's promise to Abraham in the everlasting covenant alerts us to the truth "that the blessing of Abraham" is "through Jesus Christ"--"the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14). "The promise of the Spirit" is righteousness (*agape*-love) by faith. "The *love* of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb. 10:16).

These are of that special group we see in Revelation 7. "Another angel ascending from the east," places God's seal on these people who welcome His special ministry. They have surrendered their sinful hearts to "let this mind be in [them] which was also in

Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). God's people have an important role to play for in them "shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). May we let go of our resistance!

In the cross we are taught the truth. "There is explosive power in truth. Jesus said that when we know it, we shall be free" (D. K. Short, *The Mystery of 1888*, back cover).

--*Daniel H. Peters*