

OUR LORD'S WORDS ABOUT WORSHIP

John 4:19-24

Intro: I would like to pose a question this morning--not for you to answer audibly, but for you to think about and to answer for yourself.

My question is a simple one, but an important one--and it may be very revealing if you seek to answer it honestly.

The question is: WHY DID YOU COME HERE THIS MORNING?

Probably most of you would say that you came to hear the Word of God taught. That is why you were in SS; that is why you are here now.

Maybe some of you are here out of curiosity. You have been by our Church, and you decided to come to find out what kind of a Church this is. It may be that some of you from out of town have heard of Dr. Mitchell's ministry, and came to see it.

I am sure that there are some young people are here this morning because they had to come with the family. Others may be here without any real purpose--just out of habit.

My first answer would probably include most of you. YOU CAME TO RECEIVE THE WORD OF GOD.

But how many of us came to GIVE something?

Now I am not talking about giving money (although a Christian certainly should be giving to the Lord in that way).

Neither am I talking about giving your time in service (though this, too, is important for every child of God).

No, what I want to know is this: DID YOU COME HERE THIS MORNING WITH THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF GIVING GOD YOUR WORSHIP?

In fact, HOW MUCH TIME HAVE YOU SPENT WORSHIPPING THE LORD DURING THIS PAST WEEK?

I want to talk to you about worship this morning--and possibly also on some other Sunday mornings this summer. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WORSHIPPING GOD?

There, of course, is no greater authority on worship than our Lord Jesus Christ, and I invite you to consider with me the passage which we read in our Scripture reading this morning.

When our Lord engaged this Samaritan woman in conversation, He was going to bring out something which undoubtedly He already knew: This woman had a very great problem. Let us note, then

# I. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN'S PROBLEM.

You might feel that it is ridiculous to talk about one problem when obviously she had many problems. She had been married five times, and the man she was currently living with she had not bothered to marry. See vv. 16-18.

There is no reason for us to speculate about her marriages but we can say that this was a woman who had had a great deal of trouble in her lifetime. You are right if you think that she did have many problems.

But I still maintain that she had one basic problem, and it was this: HOW CAN I GET RID OF ALL OF MY PROBLEMS? (Maybe she would have even said that her life was full of sins.)

Can you tell from our Scripture reading where she had been looking to find her answer?

You might think that, when the Lord spoke of her personal affairs, she was trying to change the subject--but look closer.

WHEN HE SAID WHAT HE DID ABOUT HER, SHE IMMEDIATELY RESPONDED WITH THE STATEMENT OF V. 19. (Read.) Cf. also v. 29.

This compares with what Nicodemus said as recorded in John 3:2.

Even though she knew He was a Jew, and she a Samaritan, she believed that He was a man of God and that He might be able to answer her question. She put it in words something like this: "Can you tell me where the true place to worship is?" Read v. 20.

SHE FELT THAT IF SHE COULD ONLY WORSHIP GOD IN THE RIGHT PLACE, HER NEED WOULD BE MET. SHE HAD WORSHIPPED "IN THIS MOUNTAIN," BUT THE BURDEN REMAINED. WAS IT POSSIBLE THAT SHE WAS EXCLUDED FROM GOD BECAUSE SHE AS A SAMARITAN WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED IN JERUSALEM?

Suddenly we realize that our Lord is talking to a woman who, though a sinner, had a heart hungry for God, believing He could meet her need, but she did not know where to find Him?

Also, you can see that she believed that God was the One to say how and where men should worship Him--that it was a matter to be settled with divine authority. This is the reason she was so overjoyed to find a prophet.

Worship to her represented the sum-total of one's relationship to God. If she could only be sure of the right place! This was her thought.

How many people are making the same mistake today! We worship as our fathers did, or as some Church has told us to worship, but here was a woman who was questioning her fathers because she had not found peace in the place where they told her to worship.

Note

## II. OUR LORD'S ANSWER.

Please notice He does not say, "Come with Me to Jerusalem!" Instead, He has to correct her mistaken ideas about worship itself. AND IT IS TO THIS SINFUL, SAMARITAN WOMAN THAT HE MAKES ONE OF THE GRANDEST ANNOUNCEMENTS OF HIS ENTIRE EARTHLY MINISTRY!

Read v. 21.

He makes it very clear that, when she was thinking of a place to worship God, she was on the wrong track.

Instead, He speaks of three things.

A. The conditions necessary for worship. There are two.

### 1. Knowledge (v. 22a).

She was miserable because she did not know the truth. She had realized that worship is not determined by tradition, or by one's personal opinion, or the opinion of others. God has the answer, and He has given His answer in His Word.

But what is the answer, and where can it be found?

### 2. Salvation (v. 22b). Man's great need is for salvation from sin, and the message not only was given through the Jews (the OT), but also the Saviour came through them.

Note that He does not say that salvation is only FOR the Jews, but "salvation is of the Jews."

So you don't have to become a Jew, but you have to know the message God gave through them, and you have to receive the Saviour they prophesied about: the Messiah!

Look at what the Lord uncovered (vv. 39, 42). His disciples had been in the city, and had missed the harvest completely!

So, BEFORE YOU CAN WORSHIP THE LORD, YOU MUST KNOW HIM AS YOUR SAVIOUR.

B. The character of true worship.

Read vv. 23, 24.

Not, "in spirit and in truth," but, lit., in spirit and truth. There are two parts, but they are spoken of as one because, if you do not have both, you are not worshipping.

The Samaritans said, "In this mountain."

The Jews said, "In Jerusalem."

Jesus Christ, the Saviour, said, "In spirit and truth."

What did He mean?

Listen carefully. You might seek to worship God in Central Bible Church, or some other church, but you are not worshipping unless, first of all, you are one who has received Jesus Christ as Saviour, and secondly, your worship comes from your heart ("in spirit") and is according to the "truth."

People seem to go in one extreme or the other, but "spirit" and "truth" have to be brought together.

No wonder David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart . . ." (Psa. 139:23).

Paul says, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).



But there is one other thing that our Lord points out as being absolutely essential in worship.

Did you notice that her statements in v. 20 indicated that she was concerned solely about the place she should worship?

SHE SAID NOTHING ABOUT THE PERSON SHE WAS WORSHIPPING!

Going through the motions of worship, prostrating yourself, praying, singing hymns, will all mean nothing unless you are right in

C. The Object of your worship. Who is He? What is He like?

"God is a spirit." This means three things at least:

- (1) He is not limited to a body, such as you and I are. He is not human, not angelic. He is God.
- (2) He is so great, so vast, so incomprehensible that we are at a loss to describe Him <sup>fully</sup> even with all of the Scripture we have.
- (3) He is a Person. He can see us, He knows us, He can hear us, He can understand us, He loves us, He seeks our worship--and on and on.

Cf. what Solomon said at the dedication of the temple he had built:

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded" (1 Kings 8:27).

Or, David's words:  
(Read Psa. 139:1-12.

And Stephen had to remind even the Jews of this truth in Acts 7:47-50:

"But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?"

Concl: This is what it means to worship. This is how the Samaritan woman had her problem solved--by coming to know the Lord, by concentrating on the Person to be worshipped (not the place), and by worshipping Him from her heart, and according to the Word.  
Her answer is ours too!

ABRAHAM, THE WORSHIPER

Gen. 22:1-12

Intro: Two weeks ago this morning I considered with you Our Lord's Words About Worship, from John 4.

This morning I want to consider with you, Abraham, the Worshiper. On the remaining Sunday mornings of this month we will be looking at other Bible characters in connection with their worship of God.

All of this is done that we may learn more in our own personal experience about what it means to worship God.

The verse in Gen. 22 which brings us to Abraham is v. 5. (Read it.)

The verb that is used here ( וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה ) is translated 99 times in the O. T. as it is here: worship. Other times it is translated, bow down, stoop, do obeisance, fall down, or similar expressions.

So there is in this word the idea of one prostrating himself before another (sometimes God, sometimes false gods, sometimes another human being), but the person who does this is honoring the other, recognizing that the other one is greater, or at least worthy of homage and esteem.

Again, as in John 4, we are concerned, not so much with the place and time (although these both enter in here), but with the relationship between the one who is worshipping and the one who is being worshipped.

So here we do not have a prescribed time of worship in a certain appointed place, both of which had been a part of Abraham's life, but we have a special time and an unrevealed place!

Furthermore, Abraham's worship was not during a quiet, peaceful time in his life, but in a time when he was experiencing the greatest test of his life.

Where did this testing come<sup>from</sup>?

It did not arise from:

- (1) His own heart, as though he were trying to prove that his devotion to his God was as

great as the devotion the heathen had for their gods. Nor did it arise  
(2) From Satan.

It did arise from Ha-Elohim, a name which Keil and Delitzsch define as "the personal, true God (Pent., I, 248), "the true God, whom Abraham had acknowledged and adored as his personal God, and with whom he had entered into a personal relation" (Op. cit., p. 251).

So we read in v. 1, "God (Ha-Elohim) did tempt Abraham," i.e., test him, prove him.

And we must keep in mind that when God tests us to prove us, He does it not only that He may approve, but also that He may improve us.

What, in particular, was God testing? Two things:

- (1) Abraham's faith and
- (2) Abraham's love.

This passage, as well as NT references to this experience, make this very clear.

BUT IT DID NOT COME AS A JUDGMENT FROM GOD. "WE ARE OFTEN EXPOSED TO GREAT TRIALS WITHOUT ANY REASON BEING ASSIGNED FOR THEIR INFLICTION" (PARKER, p. 236).

# I. In what way was it A TEST OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH?

## A. A test of his faith in God as a Person.

This is always first. We are often inclined to look at our faith, but genuine faith looks at God.

It is important to note that this severe testing was not Abraham's first. Over a period of at least 25 years Abraham's faith had been tested again and again--always with one result: God was always faithful to him.

Consequently, it is not surprising that Abraham's confidence in the Lord as a Person was never higher. Note his immediate obedience in v. 3. Note what he says to his servants in v. 5. Note what he says to Isaac in v. 8--even though Isaac's question may have cut him to the heart!

It was almost like he was saying what Job said in Job 13:15, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"!

We might say that Abraham's behavior at this time reflected absolute faith in God as a Person.

## B. A test of his faith in God's promises.

Did you notice how this chapter begins? "And it came to pass after these things, that God did test Abraham . . ."

What "things"?

After the things recorded in ch. 21: the birth of Isaac--the fulfillment of a promise for which Abraham had waited for more than 25 years. And after Isaac's birth God had approved of Sarah sending Ishmael away because, He had promised, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (21:12).

These were God's word to Abraham. He might not understand why such a test should come his way, but he could not doubt the Word of God.

Note how Heb. 11:17, 18 refer to this:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Have you not experienced this? Your circumstances may, at times, all but shatter your faith, but THEN THERE ARE THE PROMISES WHICH YOU CANNOT LET GO OF, AND WHICH WILL NOT LET GO OF YOU.

If I have faith in God as a Person, then it is practically impossible for me not to have faith in His promises!

#### C. A test of his faith in God's power.

Did he really mean what he said in Gen. 22:5?

Well, did he expect that he would not have to offer Isaac as a burnt offering to God?

Let Heb. 11:17, 19 answer our question:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac . . . Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead."

Did he expect to have to offer up Isaac? Certainly.

But he also expected a resurrection--and remember that up to this point in Biblical history there is not one single record of a resurrection. He was expecting God to do something that, as far as we

know, ~~that~~ had never been done before!

But look more closely.

What kind of an offering is a burnt offering? Lev. 1 will tell you that it is one which is completely consumed by fire. All of it is offered to God. So here is an amazing thing: ABRAHAM BELIEVED THAT GOD COULD TAKE THE CHARRED REMAINS OF HIS SON, AND BRING HIM BACK TO LIFE AGAIN.

Paul tells us in Romans (4:21) that Abraham was "fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

What faith in God's power!

He had seen God give him a son when, humanly speaking, it was hopeless. Could God not do the impossible?

But, now let us look briefly at this as a test of Abraham's love.

II. In what way was it A TEST OF ABRAHAM'S LOVE FOR GOD?

Note carefully the words in Gen. 22:2.

Was God being unnecessarily cruel? "The words must have dropped into Abraham's heart like molten lead" (Parker, p. 238).

III. Picture on front page of Oregonian showing mother embracing her son, with father and fiancée in the background.

David's cry over Absalom.

The burnt offering was really a love offering. Worship is an expression of our love. In Abraham's joy over receiving a son, had his deepest affection turned from God to this son.

How much do you love the Lord this morning? Do you love him enough to give Him your children.

Who has ever read the story of Hannah, sobbing out her bitterness to the Lord, praying silently so that Eli thought she was drunk. For what? Praying for a son. And she promised to give her son back to the Lord--which she did!

The Lord Jesus told the multitude:

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Doesn't He want us to love our families? Of course He does. But He wants us to love Him so much that our love for Him will be so much greater than our love for anyone else that the comparison will practically be like comparing love and hate.

How much do you love the Lord? Enough, like Abraham, to give your children to Him.

The hymn writer has expressed one way of giving in the following words:

"Give of thy sons to bear the message glorious;  
Give of thy wealth to speed them on their way;  
Pour out thy soul for them in pray'r victorious;  
And all thou spendest Jesus will repay."

This is borne out by

Concl:  
~~xxx.~~ The Aftermath.

Read v. 12, then vv. 16-18. All of the nations of the earth were to be blessed because Abraham worshipped God by proving his faith in God and his love for God.

Worship means trusting Him and loving Him by doing just ~~xxxx~~ what He asks of us. It will undoubtedly be different from what Abraham had to do, but giving all to Him in worship delights His heart and opens the doors of unparalleled blessing.

MOSES, THE WORSHIPER  
Exodus 34:1-8

Intro: Last week we considered, Abraham, the Worshiper. This morning I would like to direct your attention to Moses in the same role--as a worshiper!

The verse which brings us to Exodus 34 is v. 8. But we will never get the full impact of this verse unless we see the setting of this chapter which includes chs. 32 and 33.

What caused Moses to worship?

Strangely enough, the initial cause was the sin of Israel.

(Review the story of the worship of the golden calf.)

There is probably no incident in all of the life of Moses which brings out the spiritual character of the man than do these circumstances connected with the idolatrous worship of the Israelites!

Note how Moses begins to plead with God for Israel. Cf. 32:11-14, 31, 32--tremendous passages! We see here that God would have consumed them if it had not been for Moses' prayers.

All of this leads to the decision announced by the Lord in 33:3: "I will not go up in the midst of thee."

This was to bring Moses into even more intimate contact with God--not only for His people, but even more so for himself. He cannot tolerate the idea of being without the presence of the Lord--even though an angel would be sent to accompany them. MOSES MUST HAVE THE LORD, OR HE WILL CALL OF THE WHOLE TRIP! Cf. 33:15.

But notice: The circumstances finally come down to the place where Moses asks the Lord to do two things. His two requests mean identically the same thing. See them in 33:13 and 18.

"Shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight . . ." Be careful to note the personal emphasis. It is not, "Shew the people," but, "Shew ME."

Also in 33:18, "Shew ME thy glory," thyself!

Here is a leader whose people were in trouble, and yet it turns out to be a time when the Lord ministers to him!

Evidently, as he came to God on behalf of his people, he began to discover in the presence of the Lord some of the deeper recesses of sin in his own heart, AND HE IS REALLY AMAZED, POSSIBLY MORE THAN EVER BEFORE THAT GOD WOULD HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ANY OF THEM!

So his heart cries out for a revelation from God that will show both the glory of God and His grace to man. How can He have anything to do with us?

In 34:6, 7 Moses is receiving that revelation.

It is actually a threefold revelation:

- (1) A revelation of man.
- (2) A revelation of God's Person.
- (3) A revelation of God's love.

Let us consider them in this order.

#### I. A revelation of MAN.

Where do we see it here? In three words: iniquity . . . transgression . . . sin.

The experience of the Israelites in worshipping the golden calf gave Moses added proof that there is something terribly wrong with man.

Yet we minimize this. (Refer to the lady who said, "I don't believe in sin!") What shall we call it? Let us take a good look at these three words. They can help us to understand our deep need of God.

But before we look at them, listen to this quotation from one who gave a great part of his life to the study of the Hebrew language. This is what he says about the three words before us, and others in the OT like them:

"The pictorial power of the Hebrew language is seldom exhibited more clearly than in connection with the various aspects of evil. Every word is a piece of philosophy; nay, it is a revelation. The observer of human affairs is painfully struck by the wearisomeness of life, and by the amount of toil and travail which the children of men have to undergo to obtain a bare existence; he sees the hollowness, vanity, and unreality



of much that seems bright and charming at first; he notes that human nature, in its personal and social aspects is distorted and out of course; that the chain of love which ought to bind the great family in one has snapped asunder; that isolation and desolation have taken the place of unity and happiness; that the relationship between man and his Maker has become obscured, and that even when man knows the will of God, there is something in his nature which prompts him to rebel against it; lastly, he comes to the conviction that this state of things is not original, but is opposed to men's best instincts, and frustrates the original design of their creation" (Girdlestone, p. 76).

These words were written over 100 years again, and yet every one in this service this morning knows that these things are just as true today!

Let us get the picture presented in these words:

A. "Iniquity."

This is a word describing sin as a distortion, a perversion of what God originally intended that life should be.

Cain used this word in Gen. 4:13. The King James translators have rendered it, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." The Hebrew, however, says, My iniquity is greater than I can bear!

Life was all out of course, distorted, perverted--and he couldn't stand it. Who was responsible for it? God? NO! God had tried to stop him. Cain did it himself.

What one of us this morning does not know something of how life has been distorted for us by sin?

B. "Transgression."

This is a word describing sin as a rebellion. We are in revolt against God. It is a word which suggests (as in the quotation above) that even when we know that the will of God is one thing, we will do something else.

David called his sin a transgression in Psa. 51:1, only he spoke of it in the plural: "According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my

transgressions."

Did he know it was wrong to commit adultery? Yes, he did. Did he know it was wrong to have Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, killed? Yes, he did.

Then, WHY DID HE DO IT?

BECAUSE IN HIS HEART THERE WAS SIN WHICH IS, EVEN IN A BELIEVER, IN OPEN REBELLION AGAINST GOD. This is why you and I do things that we know to be wrong-- but we do them! Our sins may not be the same as David's, but we have our transgressions.

C. "Sin."

This is like hamartano in the NT--missing the mark. Cf. Rom. 3:23.

It is a word which describes sin as getting our objectives set in the wrong direction. Even when we want to do the right thing, we find that it is not within our reach.

Paul expressed it this way: (Read Rom. 7:21-24.)

Sin produces wretchedness because it keeps us from achieving what we would like to do.

II. A revelation of GOD'S PERSON.

Is it any wonder that Moses cried out for a revelation of God? If man is so hopeless, can God meet His need? Even though Moses knew the answer, undoubtedly he needed reassurance at this point.

Note what God says about Himself!

He is "the Lord, the Lord God." He is Jehovah; He is Jehovah-El.

A. Jehovah.

1. Grammatically this name means that He is the living God, the One Who is, and the One who is always the same.
2. Back in Exodus 6 Moses had been informed that this name meant that God was a promise-keeping God. This is especially important here.

3. What God is doing here, and the "Thus saith Jehovah" which runs through the OT indicates that God is a God who wants to make Himself known to man; He is a God of revelation; all the time we are trying to get through to Him, He is trying to get through to us!

But He is also

B. Jehovah-El. What does this add.

El means the power--that He is the Mighty God; yes, the Almighty God.

It means that He not only intends to be faithful, or intends to make Himself known to us, but HE IS ABLE TO DO ALL THAT IS INVOLVED IN THE NAME JEHOVAH.

But, if anything could add to all of this, let us note that here we have also

III. A revelation of God's love.

Keil and Delitzsch (II, 241) remark that, at this point, "all the words which the language contained to express the idea of grace in its varied manifestations to the sinner, are crowded together here, to reveal the fact that in His inmost being God is love."

A. "Merciful."

It is a word which describes the compassion you feel when you see a loved one in weakness or suffering, helpless to help themselves, and you have to do something. This is what God is like.

B. "Gracious."

This is the Hebrew word for grace--God's willingness to meet our need even though we do not deserve it and could never pay Him back for what He can do for us.

C. "Longsuffering."

This is translated, "slow to anger," in Psa. 103:8. It takes an eternity for Him to get angry. His patience is amazing.

D. "Abundant in goodness and truth."

"Goodness" expresses His "eager and earnest desire, ardour, zeal" by which God is moved in His heart concerning man's plight.

"Truth" here means faithfulness, certainty, assurance.

He guards all of this for immediate use ("Keeping mercy"), and then adds a fifth word.

E. "Forgiving."

How does God forgive? What does it mean?

It literally means that He lifts up our iniquity and transgression and sin, and bears it away.

The same word is used in Isa. 53:12 where we read, "He bare the sin of many." Cf. 1 Pet. 2:24; Isa. 53:6---for the idea.

Concl: So we have man in terrible plight because of sin in its various aspects.

But, thank God, we also have a God who by His love for man, as Jehovah, is perfectly able to meet our need.

One word of warning: Failure to turn to Him not only brings its terrible consequences, but makes the effects of sin felt on generations to come.

Is it any wonder that Moses did what he did in v. 8?

"And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped."

May we join him in worshipping God too!

CB - 7/23/67 am.

## Joshua, the Worshiper Joshua 5:10-15

Intro: Last week as we considered Moses, the Worshiper in Ex. 32-34, you may have noticed a very significant thing mentioned about Joshua.

Moses had gone into the Tabernacle. These were solemn moments for Israel. The emphasis had gradually shifted from the people to Moses. GOD WAS DEALING WITH HIS SERVANT IN A TREMENDOUS WAY!

But we read this:

"And the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the Tabernacle." (Ex. 33:11).

No mention is made that he went in - only that he did not come out. HERE WAS A MAN WITH A GREAT HUNGER FOR GOD IN HIS HEART!

The first time he is mentioned in the Bible is Joshua 1:7, 10. He was the military leader who defeated Amalek - always carefully following Moses' instructions. "So Joshua did as Moses had said to him" (Ex. 17:10).

Joshua was with Moses when he went into the mount to get the Law (Ex. 24:13).

Always in the background, but always

manifesting two things:

- (1) A willingness to obey.
- (2) A desire to be with God.

Finally, the leadership of Israel was placed in his hands. Moses was gone. Joshua had led the people through the Jordan (as Moses had led them through the Red Sea). JERICHO WAS NEXT. How would it be done?

We might call out Yip this morning, Strange Preparations for War. And yet they are not so strange when you consider the ways of God.

Let us consider three spiritual lessons surrounding this experience in the life of Joshua, the worshipper.

I. God was teaching Joshua that spiritual preparation is the only pathway to blessing.

I hope you have come here this morning with a hunger in your heart for the Lord, and for the blessing of the Lord in your own life.

More than this - I hope you have come because you have a hunger in your heart to see the blessing of God in the greatest possible way upon Central Bible Church.

Are we being deceived by a large building, and by large numbers?

Do we not realize that the measure of God's blessing is measure by what goes on in our hearts?

God started things by asking Joshua to do something which went back to Abraham's day (Gen. 17). He asked Joshua to circumcise the men of Israel.

What was the spiritual significance of this?

It was their way of saying that they believed God would fulfill His promises regarding their salvation - and consequently, they were setting themselves apart from all other people to belong to the Lord. It meant they were not their own, but His!

FOR OVER FORTY YEARS THIS HAD NOT BEEN OBSERVED AMONG THE ISRAELITES.

Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20 - "What, know ye not..."

Secondly, they "kept the passover."

What did the passover commemorate?

That Jehovah was their Redeemer.

DO YOU KNOW THAT AS FAR AS THE RECORD IS CONCERNED, THE ISRAELITES HAD OBSERVED THE PASSOVER ONLY ONCE IN 40 YRS SINCE THEY HAD LEFT EGYPT - AND THAT WAS THE FIRST YEAR OUT?

Cf. Num. 9:1 ff.

In all these years they had ~~not~~ <sup>only</sup> once as a ~~of~~ nation remembered their redemption.

DO YOU SUPPOSE THIS SHOWED JOSHUA'S CONCERN?

We can't live in the past, but no child of God can really be spiritually where he should be who doesn't frequently remember and marvel at his redemption.

But there is another lesson here.

II. God was teaching Joshua that He never gives His work fully into man's hands.

That it was  
the Lord,  
cf. 5:15;  
6:2  
(Chapter book  
in that place)

Cf. 5:13, 14.

He did not come, <sup>merely</sup> to help Joshua;  
He came as Joshua's commander -  
in - chief, as his prince.

What thoughts must have gone  
through Joshua's mind as he was  
thinking about Jericho?

How would he conquer Jericho?  
He did not know? It could it be  
like he conquered Amalek. The  
walls were there!

Possibly he came with angels.  
They are the Lord's host.

What a precious fulfillment of  
the promise - "as I was with Moses,  
so will I be with thee" (Josh. 1:5) -  
"I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."

Must not Joshua's mind have  
gone back to Jacob in Gen. 32 -  
where Jacob was being taught this  
same lesson.

Or to Moses in Ex. <sup>3:11, 12;</sup> 5, 6.

Later Zerubbabel needed the same  
truth (Neh. 4:6).

And Paul taught it to the  
Corinthians: "So then neither is he  
that planteth any thing, neither he  
that watereth; BUT GOD that giveth  
the increase.

Acts 1:8.  
Matt. 28:18-20 "All power...  
No, I am with you..."



III. Finally, God was teaching His servant Joshua that humble worship of a holy God brings blessing.

Had Moses told Joshua about his experience at the burning bush?

Probably many times!

Every generation of the Lord's servants has to learn this - how God loves the humble heart

Think of what Peter had had to learn to write, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6).

Do you remember he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"? (Mt. 26:33).

HE HAD TO LEARN THAT NONE OF THE DISCIPLES (EXCEPT JUDAS) WOULD FALL FASTER THAN HE WOULD.

When Joshua said, "What saith my lord unto his servant?" we read in v. 15, "and the captain... And Joshua did so."

Concl: I don't like to speak of secrets to blessing, because it's right here in the Word. But this is what brings the blessing of God as we see it here in Joshua's experience during this crucial time in his life.

GIDEON, THE WORSHIPER  
Judges 7:7-15

Intro: In succession we have considered three Old Testament worshippers, and we come to the fourth this morning: Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and now Gideon.

We call them worshipers because the Bible does!

It is very interesting to note that the incidents surrounding the times when it is said that these men worshipped have certain things in common.

In the first place, all were going through a time of crisis. Abraham had been asked to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God. Moses was dealing with God over the idolatrous worship of the Israelites when they bowed down to the golden calf. Joshua was facing the conquest of Jericho. And now we find Gideon called upon to deliver the Israelites from the overwhelming numbers of "the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east" (7:12).

In the second place, and possibly most important of all, God chose these times of crisis to humble His children. These were times when these men were brought to an end of themselves and all they could do was to cast themselves fully upon the Lord.

In the third place, we find this common characteristic in the life of each one of these man: It is said that they were going to worship or that they actually worshipped BEFORE THE CRISIS WAS OVER! (Note how this is true in each case.)

This morning let us pay particular attention to the way in which humility played such a large part in God's dealings with Gideon.

- I. Note his humble origin (Judges 6:11-16). It is doubtful if there were a lowlier tribe in Israel than Manasseh. Both he and Ephraim were adopted by Jacob, being the sons of Joseph--which would place them lower than the others. But Manasseh, though the elder, was not given the chief blessing by Jacob (cf. Gen. 48, esp. vv. 19, 20).

But, in addition to this, Gideon felt that his family was "poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

This is the way Gideon felt about himself, and this is what is so extremely important! God chose a man who knew that he was nothing even before God called him.

We have been studying the prophecy of Jeremiah. Do you remember how Jeremiah responded to his call?

God said to him, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. 1:5).

How did Jeremiah respond? "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jer. 1:6).

When Samuel went to Jesse's house to anoint a king of Israel, David was such an unlikely prospect that his father did not even call him in to stand before Samuel. Samuel had to say, "Are here all thy children?" (1 Sam. 16:11).

When God called Isaiah, he said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, . . ." (Isa. 6:5).

When God called Moses, he said, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Ex. 3:11).

One passage of Scripture every child of God should know by heart is 1 Cor. 1:26-31. Please turn to it. (Read.)

Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim 1:15).

And you and I are just the same. The important thing is: Do we know this down in the depths of our own hearts? We Christians are just as guilty as the world of having our stars, our celebrities, our big names---but where are the men who like John the Baptist of old who was content to be "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord" (John 1:23)?

But note a second point.

## II. God sought to deepen His humility.

Note the story in Judges 7:1-8.

Gideon faced an army of 135,000 men (cf. Judges 8:10). He had 32,000. He was outnumbered 4 to 1--and a little more. Then God cut him down to 10,000 men, and he was outnumbered about 13 or 14 to 1. Finally, God cut him back to 300 men. Now he was outnumbered 450 to 1!

How would you have felt about that?

Now would you note an interesting thing. God sent 22,000 men home because they were afraid. Gideon seems to have been willing to go with 10,000, but God said, "The people are yet too many." So it<sup>was</sup> cut down to 300. THEN, when the Lord tells him in v. 9 to go down to the host to conquer them, He adds, "But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host . . ."

What does this mean?

It means that God cut down the forces of Israel and cut them down again to such an extent that even Gideon, who at first was not afraid, in the end feared that they could never do what they were setting out to do. HE HAD FEAR IN HIS HEART.

Listen to Paul's words:

"For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears" (2 Cor. 7:5).

I am not trying to rob these men of the honor that is rightfully theirs; I AM ONLY TRYING TO HELP YOU TO SEE THAT THEY WERE MEN!

At times it seems that God works on us until things that did not previously bother us begin to bother us. Like Gideon, we knew no fear, and then suddenly we are held in its grip.

What was God doing?

He told Gideon (Judges 7:2) that He was trying to keep Israel from vaunting themselves against Him.

What is vaunting? It is boasting. It is pride. And it always happens when the children of God forget their nothingness.

So, in teaching the people, their leader, who was already a humble man, is brought lower. God was doing this.

Remember, child of God, that regardless of how much of your own heart you have seen, there is always more that God can show you. With our three previous worshipers, God sought to bring them lower and lower before Him!

But there is another very precious truth that I want to point out to you in this passage this morning. It is this

III. God ministered to His servant in the lowly place to which he had come.

And will you note that he uses the strangest means to minister to Gideon. He actually uses two of the enemy he was going to fight.

(Read vv. 10-14.)

Before, God had spoken to Gideon through the fleece (Judges 6:36-40). And even before that his call had been confirmed by the sign given by the angel of the Lord, earlier in chapter 6.

But now God ministers to Gideon again--through heathen men who had been given a dream by God.

Why did God picture His people as "a cake of barley bread"?

Because it pictured the lowliness of His people. It was the food of the poor people who could not buy wheat. God was showing Gideon again that it was not the people who were going to turn the tide. **THEY WERE NOTHING. It was God!**

What were they going to do? They were going to smite the greatest source of pride of these Midianites: their tents--knocking them over and flattening them out! When God got through with the Midianites, their power and pride would be completely broken.

And this is what happened! You remember the story. There were 120,000 out of the 135,000 (Judges 8:10) who died, and without a single Israelite drawing a sword! **They killed each other!**

Concl: How did it happen? Let me give you the Holy Spirit's account in Hebrews 11:32ff.

Did you ever try to match the names in v. 32 with the statements in the following verses? "Gideon . . . who through faith subdued kingdoms . . . obtained promises . . . escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." **Through faith!**

The God of Gideon still lives, and still works through those who, knowing their own nothingness, trust Him for the display of His power.