

Remnant Life Church

February 2, 2025

## **Worship**

### **The Biblical Definition**

John 4:1-26

The word “worship” is as common a word in church as “sermon” or “bible”

- The word, however, typically conjures up a single image – singing songs
  - And while this is not wrong, it is certainly not the full definition, function, or purpose of worship
  - Tragically, what is being called worship is many times hard to differentiate from a pop concert or an off-Broadway production
    - There are now often elaborate stage set-ups
    - Special effects are being utilized
    - Fog machines and laser shows
    - Choreography is being added
    - All sorts of what can only be called gimmicks to attract and hold the attention of the congregant
    - What is missing, however, is the only thing that should be present, adoration and attention given to God alone
  - In fact, there are as many accepted definitions today of worship as there are styles of expression
    - There are certainly those that are heartfelt, sincere, meaningful, and moving
    - But there are too many that are outrageous, unbiblical, often silly, and can become downright spiritually dangerous
- Yet to worship God fulfills a requirement found in each of us as His creation
  - You were made to worship God
  - But since we have become more diverse and intellectual in our ways, the importance, the meaning, and the quest to worship God has changed drastically
  - So much so that today, in many of the largest churches, it has become more worldly and secular a spectacle designed primarily to entertain rather than fulfill its true purpose
- Because one fact remains true today regardless of what you are being told: people are searching for God
  - Many do find that relationship within the church where there is biblical teaching, worship, and fellowship
  - Others regard it more as a personal, private journey that, unfortunately, almost always strays off course and dissolves into something much more self-centered in nature
  - Others, in their desire to feel closer to God, will grasp at anything, even the unusual and bizarre, in an effort to identify God in their midst
    - In 1977, Maria Rubio of Lake Arthur, New Mexico, was assembling a burrito for lunch one day when she noticed that the skillet burn marks on one of her tortillas resembled the face of Jesus. She excitedly showed it to her husband and neighbors and they all agreed that it genuinely bore a

striking resemblance to the familiar iconic Roman Catholic image of Jesus.

She hurriedly took the tortilla to her local priest in order to have the tortilla blessed. She testified to the priest that the tortilla had changed her life. Her husband agreed that since the day she had discovered the image, she had been a more peaceful, happy, and loving wife. The priest, not accustomed to blessing tortillas, was understandably somewhat reluctant but finally relented and agreed to her request.

Mrs. Rubio took the tortilla home and placed it reverently in a shadow box with piles of cotton around it to make it look like it was floating on clouds. Mr. Rubio even built a special altar for it to be displayed. They then took the box out to a shed in the backyard and set up a small shrine that they opened to visitors who wished to stop by and see the face of Jesus.

Within a few months, more than 8000 people came to see and visit what became known as the Shrine of the Jesus of the Tortilla. Everyone who came agreed that it looked like the face of Jesus – that is, except for one reporter who said he thought it looked more like Leon Spinks, the former heavyweight boxing champion.

Within 2 years, more than 35,000 people had visited the shrine, and it remained a popular local destination for 28 years. Then, sadly, in 2005, Mrs. Rubio's granddaughter took the shadow box to school for show and tell, the box was dropped and the box, along with the tortilla shattered. After that, people lost interest in the broken pieces of the tortilla and the shrine was finally closed.

- Now, that may sound a little far-fetched but how many similar stories have you come across?
  - I typed in a quick Google search and found plenty of reports, with pictures of the face of Jesus in unusual places
    - It was seen in a water stain on a piece of drywall
    - A pancake
    - The crease of a white sweat sock as it was drying
    - An orange that had been cut in half
    - The cheese on a slice of pizza
    - And, my personal favorite – on a Wal-Mart receipt where the paper had gotten wet in storage and printed out with a discoloration on it
  - It is sad, and more than a little disturbing, that many would see these types of things and treat them as objects of veneration
    - But what is sadder still is that today, it is actually easier to find examples of this distorted concept of worship than to find authentic worship in our churches based on sound biblical principles
    - The Bible is very clear on the how, whom, and when of worship, but little of it is being incorporated into the life of the 21st-century church in America

- My friends, if you are not a true worshipper of God, everything else in your life will be spiritually out of sync.
  - Conversely, nothing will accelerate your spiritual growth faster and with greater meaning than to understand, embrace, and practice true worship
  - Because it is not an event, it is a way of life for the ones who call themselves a child of God

And so, since there are so many varied and accepted ways of expressing worship in today's church, how do you determine what is right, and acceptable to God?

- There is only one source, the Word of God
- In the 16th century, the church as it was known then, underwent a radical theological transformation that became known as the Protestant Reformation
  - One of the most notable names to come out of that time was a theology professor at the University of Wittenburg in Germany by the name of Martin Luther, who authored the 95 thesis that was, in essence, a call to break from many of the teachings of the Roman Catholic church
  - The act of Luther presenting his writings publicly as much as anything began the development of the Protestant church

It was out of the Reformation that came the *Quintus Solae* (Latin for the Five Alones)

- These are the theological foundational pillars on which the Protestant movement was built and that we still hold to today
- They are:
  - *Sola fida* – we are justified by faith alone
  - *Sola gratia* – we receive salvation by grace alone
  - *Sola Christus* – our faith is in Christ alone
  - *Sola deo gloria* – we give Glory to God alone
  - *Sola scriptura* – Scripture alone
- It is that fifth tenant that must be the guide for the activities of the church...including how, what, and why we worship
  - It is what we here at RLC hold to
  - We will not do anything that is not supported by the Scripture
  - And that includes what we do on Sunday morning
- What does *Sola scriptura* mean for us as it relates to the expression of worship?
  - It is how we regulate what is done when we worship
  - Man has certainly gotten his hands into what is now called worship
    - Much of it is designed to attract people rather than give glory to God
    - Much of it is designed to entertain rather than focus on and praise the giver of life
    - Churches are turning more and more to the worldly expertise of psychology, business models, politics, public relations, and entertainment to govern how they will worship
    - Rather than the only source of infallible spiritual truth and guidance – God's Word

- What must be brought once again to the place of total acceptance is that truly, scripture is enough
  - It is sufficient by itself – *Sola Scriptura* – scripture alone
  - It was the 16th-century French theologian Reformist John Calvin who was one of the first to articulate the meaning of Sola Scriptura as it related to the worship of God
  - *We may not adopt any device in our worship which seems fit to ourselves but must look to Him who alone is entitled. Therefore, if we would have Him approve our worship, this rule, which He everywhere enforces with the utmost strictness, must be carefully observed...God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word.*
  - Calvin then used the Scripture itself to support his words
    - **I Sam 15:22** - *...To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*
      - IOW – to give of yourself to the Lord, in any way, is only acceptable when it is in line with and obedient to His Word
    - **Matt 15:9** - *They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.*
      - This is Jesus speaking to the Pharisees and is quoting **Isa 29:13**
      - He is saying that the worship that is approved and developed by man, apart from God, is not worship at all
    - John Hopper is an author of commentaries on the life of John Calvin and he restates what Calvin wrote in this way
      - *Nothing should be used in the Church which has not the express Word of God to support it...otherwise it will bring no profit when done or used...*
- Every Sunday, preachers around the world teach on the theology of the Bible, yet worship remains one of the most misunderstood doctrines of all
  - And it is one reason, I believe, why so many churches in this county, so many denominations, find themselves moving further and further away from the things of God according to His Word
    - And few things have moved further away from God’s Word than those activities being presented as godly expressions of worship
  - There have been entire revivals built around a desire for the presence of the Holy Spirit that is then claimed to be responsible for a host of actions labeled so-called worship
  - How many of these are you familiar with or have perhaps witnessed yourself?
    - Drunken Glory – acting inebriated
    - Laughing uncontrollably
    - Barking like a dog or growling like wild animals
    - Clucking like chickens
    - Running through the church, jumping, convulsing uncontrollably on the floor

- And they will most often claim, when they are through with their antics, that they had absolutely no control over themselves
- The fact is, none of these actions have any basis in Scripture yet they are justified through misinterpretations and biblical concepts taken out of context
  - The best example of what the presence of God actually does is found in the work and ministry of Jesus Christ, the personhood of the Holy Spirit
  - **Luke 8:26-36** - The demoniac of Gerasene was clothed, seated, and in his right mind after being set free from the bondage of the evil spirit
- I don't say these things this morning to slander people or other churches and their activities
  - I say them so that you may be aware of what is happening in many places that is not of God
  - What makes me so sure?
    - Because of what the Word of God says
    - And if it does not support it the activity, regardless of what you call it, it is not of God
  - And those things can become so outrageous that even Hollywood noticed and began making fun of it

Between Sept 1970 and June 1974 there was a television variety show on – in the days when anyone and everyone had a variety show – called the Flip Wilson Comedy Hour

- For those of you who do not know that name, Flip Wilson was a black comedian who, along with Bill Cosby and a few others, is credited with helping to desegregate that genre of entertainment
  - He was born in 1933 in the middle of the Great Depression and used humor as a coping mechanism when he and his 9 siblings were abandoned by their mother and their father put them into foster homes
  - At the height of his popularity, he hosted a successful variety show on TV which predominantly featured sketch comedy with Wilson playing the main roles interspersed with the most popular singers and musical acts of the day
  - One such reoccurring character was the Reverend Leroy who pastored the Church of What's Happening Now
    - The sketches were clever and very funny
    - Rev. Leroy's focus was always money and how to get more people into his church using any means necessary especially if it was slick and showy
  - It is sad to say that if you were to watch those same skits from Wilson's show today, it would not take much convincing to realize there are many Rev. Leroy's leading churches today
    - The opulence and extravagant lifestyles of many of the most famous preachers in this country today clearly reveals what is truly being worshipped
    - John Wimber (pastor and author) famously wrote these words: *Show me where you spend your time, money, and energy, and I'll tell you what you worship.*

I want to wrap up our time together this morning and this introduction to our series on worship by reading an account where Jesus states what must be at the heart of true, biblical worship.

Jesus was traveling from Judea to Galilee and was going to pass near to Samaria. He had sent the disciples ahead to get food so that He could have a conversation with a Samaritan woman who would be coming to the well to draw water

- The Jews hated the Samaritans because they were seen as being unfaithful to the ancestry of Jacob, their lineage, by embracing elements and aspects of not only the Jewish culture but Persian, and Greek as well
  - They intermarried with people who were not Jewish
  - And their offspring became the people the Jews despised
- They were treated as outcasts and for a Jew to associate with them in any way was to degrade themselves even to the point they considered themselves ceremonially unclean
- Jesus, however, had a very different way of interacting with them
  - Jesus chose this person – a Samaritan and a woman – to reveal for the first time the true nature of who He was and what He had come to do
  - And listen for what Jesus says is the foundational stone for worship that is pleasing to God

**READ - [John 4:1-26](#)**