

ACCEPTABLE INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP

Lesson 5

Worship of God as Father

John 4:19-24

When a man says, "I am the father of my children" or a child says, "That's my father," what is meant by the term "father"? A father is a creator, author and head of a family. He is one who is respected, loved and feared by his children. A father also has the responsibility of loving, protecting, caring and providing for needs, guiding and disciplining his children.

One of the great revelations of the Bible concerning the person of God is that He is the Father. The Old Testament has only a few references to God as Father and they are always in relationship to Him as Father of the Jewish nation.

"Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your creator, who made you and formed you" (Deut. 32:6)?

"Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another" (Mal. 2:10).

As the Father of Israel, God's special care for His people was seen in that He loved, pitied, rebuked and required obedience from them. It is in the New Testament that the fatherhood of God is brought into full revelation.

All through the New Testament we see honor, worship and prayer directed to God the Father. In John 4:19-24, Christ made a full revelation to the Samaritan woman showing that the primary object of worship was God the Father.

"Jesus declared, 'Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem . . . Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth'" (John 4:21, 23-24).

This woman's problem was that she did not have a personal God. She had some limited facts about God (most of them were perverted) but she did not know the one, true and living God. Her God was a distant God, a concept but not in any way personal. She had localized God to a temple but did not see God as Father and God as Spirit who is everywhere present. She really did not communicate with her God, and her false and perverted views of God did not change her life. The Samaritan woman did not understand that God was to be worshipped as the Father. He was to be loved, respected and feared as

the one who protects, loves, guides and disciplines His children. She had to learn that God was a Father before she could really offer up acceptable worship to God.

FATHER OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

There are many behind the scene implications of the word “Father” in John 4. One of these is that Christ wanted the Samaritan woman to learn that God the Father is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a New Testament revelation and has great implications to our acceptable worship. **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Eph. 13)**. This verse clearly teaches that God the Father is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in a very special and unique sense. The relationship of the Father to Christ is Trinitarian in nature. If there is a father, there must be a son, and since there is God the Father, He must also have a Son, even Jesus Christ. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16)**. God the Father sustains a particular relationship to Jesus Christ that He does not sustain with any other creature or human being. This is why Christ in His teaching always made a distinction between “my Father” and “your Father.” God the Father is the Father of Jesus Christ in the wonder and mystery of the Godhead. The Samaritan woman had to learn the doctrine of the Trinity if she was to offer up acceptable worship to God. She had to understand that the Father was to be approached through God the Son if she was to worshiped aright.

The Father and the Son are One. The Bible very clearly teaches that Christ and the Father are “one.” **“I and the Father are one” (John 10:30)**. The word “one” is neuter in the Greek and means “one in essence” or “one in substance.” The Father and the Son have the sameness in the essence of life. We know that Christ was claiming equality with God in John 10:30 because the Jews tried to stone Him for blasphemy. **“Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?’” (John 10:31-32)?** When Christ called God His Father He was claiming a special oneness in relationship with the Father not true of any created human being, and the Jews clearly understood His claim. **“For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:18)**. Christ did not become God, for He was always God in the Second Person of the Trinity. God the Son robed His divine personality with perfect humanity and became a man. However, Christ was always God before He became a man. In eternity past, He shared the Father’s glory. **“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5)**. Christ alone knows God the Father because He is God in the flesh.

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matt. 11:17).

The New Testament writers tell us that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Christ of the New Testament. For instance, in Isaiah 40:3 we have a prophetic reference to John the Baptist's ministry that prepared the way for Christ. Isaiah 40:3 says the message of John would be, **"A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.'"** The word for "LORD" in the Hebrew is Jehovah. In Matthew 3:3, Isaiah 40 is quoted and we see that John the Baptist's message was, **"This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"** The Lord here refers to Christ. The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Christ of the New Testament. Jesus Christ is God and this is clearly affirmed by the Apostle Paul. **"(Jesus Christ), who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness"** (Phil. 2:6-7).

Since Jesus Christ is God, then we see that He is an equal object of worship with the Father. **"When they saw him (Christ), they worshiped him"** (Matt. 28:17). He is an equal object of honor with the Father. **"That all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him"** (John 5:23). He is also an equal object of eternal life. **"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent"** (John 17:3). Only one who is God is to be worshipped, and Christ qualifies for our worship because He is God. Jesus said Himself that to see the attributes of the Father people were to look at Him.

"Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' Jesus answered, 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?'" (John 14:8-10).

The Bible teaches three persons in one Godhead; three personalities subsisting in one eternal Being. The Father is God; the Son is God, the Spirit is God, There are not three Gods, but three persons in the Godhead. This is a great mystery, and yet, without an understanding of the Trinity, no one can offer acceptable worship to the God of Scripture. Someone has said, "If you deny the Trinity, you lose your soul. If you try to figure out the Trinity, you lose your mind."

The Father is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The writers of the New Testament recognized the unique relationship between the Father and the Son. **"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Pet. 1:3).

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better" (Eph. 1:17).

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5-6).

They recognized that Jesus Christ was Emanuel (God with us) and that as the Son of God He sustained a unique relationship with the Father. The Apostles could not think of God except as the Father who was revealed in Christ and the Father of Christ. **“Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father’s Son, will be with us in truth and love” (2 John 3).** Worship is acceptable only when given to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Worship is not acceptable when the object of that worship is not the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both the Father and Christ are worthy of worship as persons in the Trinity.

Only Trinitarian worship is acceptable to God. Al Martin says, “A God who is devoid of the mysterious inter-Trinitarian relationships, a God who can be reduced to mathematical formulas, is an idol.” This means that every Jehovah’s Witness is an idolater because he refuses to worship a Trinitarian God, giving the Father and the Son the same honor.

“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him (John 5:22-23).

This also means that every Protestant liberal who bypasses Christ to get to the Father is guilty of false worship. The only true Jehovah is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Worship is to be Directed to the Father through the Son. Worship is primarily to be given to the Father through the Son by means of the Holy Spirit. While it is true at times that Christ is worshipped in the New Testament as God, the dominant motif is worship to the Father. Obviously Thomas said of Christ, **“My Lord and my God” (John 20:28)** and when John saw a vision of Christ on the island of Patmos, **“He fell at his feet as though dead”(Rev. 1:17).** It is not wrong to have as the direct object of worship the person of Christ, but the general mood and climate of the New Testament is worship to the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. **“For through him (Christ) we both have access to the Father by one Spirit”(Eph. 2:18).** Absolutely no one can go to the Father except through Christ. **“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).** When the Apostle Paul prayed, he prayed to the Father. **“For this reason I kneel before the Father, . . . (Eph. 3:14).** It is Jesus Christ who takes a person to God the Father. **“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God”(1 Pet. 3:18).** It is the purpose of Christ to bring us to the Father that we might offer up acceptable worship. **“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” . . . (1 Tim. 2:5).** A.W. Tozer says,

“Also I think we ought not to talk too much about Jesus just as Jesus. I think we ought to remember who He is. ‘He is thy Lord; and worship thou him.’ And though He comes down to the lowest point of our need and makes Himself accessible to us as tenderly as a mother to her child, still don’t forget that when John saw Him -- that John who had lain on His bosom -- when John saw Him he fell at His feet as dead.” (*Worship: The Missing Jewel*).

FATHER OF ALL TRUE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST

Before Conversion to Christ. Before conversion to Christ each person as a man is related to Adam his human father and as a sinful man is sold out to his father the devil

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

Unsaved men have the devil as their father. Before conversion, all men are lost, children of wrath and under the influence of the devil.

After Conversion to Christ. At the moment we received Jesus Christ, the Bible tells us we were adopted into God’s family and became children of God.

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father’” (Gal. 4:4-6).

Because of this new relationship, our first act of worship is that we cry out, “Abba, Father” which is a term of endearment and deep trust. A very loose translation might be, “Daddy, Daddy.” Before conversion, we may have, seen God as sovereign, wrathful and terrible, greatly fearing this God who is justice, righteousness, holiness and wrath. But Christ, took us to the Father who is love, so that now we sense His protection, care and concern for us as His children. The wrathful God as Father loves us. The sovereign God as Father communicates with us. The holy God as Father accepts us. We no longer fear God and His wrath but respect Him and only fear His discipline to us as His children. Because we know God as Father, we cry out, “Abba, Father.” Knowing God as Father through Christ gives us great assurance of our salvation.

“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father’. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Rom. 8:15-16).

We have confidence to pray and we say, **“Our Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:9).** We enter into the joys of being saved. **“How great is the love the Father has lavished**

on us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1)! We experience the spiritual blessings of God. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). We also experience the comforts of the Father in the midst of our trials of life.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

Our first act of worship as a Christian begins with the words, “Abba, Father” but this is just the beginning of our worship of the Father as He is manifested in the Son and revealed in the Holy Scriptures. We all must go deeper into our worship of God the Father. We must expand our horizons of worship. We must all seek to be full worshipers of God so as to give Him acceptable worship. Tozer again says,

“Well, it’s (worship) an attitude, a state of mind, a sustained act, subject to degrees of perfection and intensity. As soon as He sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts we say “Abba” and we’re worshipping. That’s one thing. But it’s quite another thing to be worshipers in the full New Testament sense of the word and up to our possibilities.” (*Worship: The Missing Jewel*)