

## **WORSHIP IS AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE TO GOD**

By Terry Jones, September 14, 2008  
Christ's Church at Tiffin, Ohio

### **Deuteronomy 12:8-14**

#### **CENTRAL SERMON THEME – We express our love to God in worshipping Him according to His instructions.**

**INTRO.** - Would you take an imaginary trip with me? Let's walk back through time to ancient Egypt about 3,500 years ago. Pretend you are a Jewish child living in a devout Jewish home. Your father and mother come home each night exhausted and hurting from their slave labor for the Pharaoh of Egypt. You have heard your parents say repeatedly, "Someday we will go home." The abuse your parents endure daily has increased because the Egyptians added to their burdens in defiance to a liberator named Moses. You have heard Moses is a great and powerful man who boldly demands release of his fellow Jews from the Pharaoh. He has already performed nine miracles with the expectation of the last miracle happening tonight.

The family is eating a special ceremonial meal with expectations of something happening tonight. The blood of a young lamb has been sprinkled on the posts of the door. You and your family have finished the delicious meal of roasted lamb seasoned with various herbs and spices. Discussions about the meaning of the blood on the doorposts and the meal are taking place. After the meal is finished you go to bed with so much excitement you can hardly get to sleep. Finally you fall to sleep.

Suddenly your parents awaken you in the middle of the night to rise and get dressed for the time has come to leave. Your family packs your possessions on an oxcart. Every Jewish family joins the huge crowd which is following a brilliant light in the sky. As a small child you feel the excitement of finally leaving this nation that has abused so many of your people. You are thinking to yourself, "Our God is good!" The trip proceeds well as you approach the Red Sea.

As this large caravan of people get near the Red Sea someone sees an army of Egyptian soldiers in chariots moving towards you. People are shouting to each other, "They are going to kill us!" Panic engulfs the entire group until Moses stands up to speak. You had heard of this great man but you had never seen him until now. He stands with his staff in his hand

thundering forth these words "Do not fear! Stand still and see the God work!" He touches the edge of the sea with his staff.

Suddenly the waters split open as a powerful wind separates the sea until the bottom of the sea can be seen. The wind dries up the bottom of the sea to prepare a path for you and all the others to walk across. Moses commands everyone, "'Follow me!" Thousands of you rush into the sea bed. Someone yells, "Hurry, the Egyptians are coming." You cannot see because you are too short but you know something great or horrible is about to happen!" Finally everyone has now safely escaped to the other side.

The Egyptian soldiers do not stop their pursuit. The soldiers with their powerful horse enter the path of the seabed to capture the Israelites. What will you do? Panic seizes you and your fellow Jews. You and your people have no armed soldiers. They will certainly capture everyone. As quickly as the waters had receded the sea violently begins to close in on the Egyptians. The raging sea destroys every soldier and horse. You are safe. Everyone is safe. Now is the time to celebrate. You are thinking, "God is good."

The days pass by as the families celebrate their new freedom from their oppressive slave masters. God has destroyed your enemies before your eyes. You will never forget. You think, "God is so good to us." You and your family are traveling through a desert with only a small supply of food and water. The food and water are consumed until there is no water left. People including your family complain to Moses for bringing you to this barren place to die of thirst. God brings water from a rock. Everyone rejoices over the miracle and the abundant supply of water for everyone.

The food supply dwindles until all the food is consumed. There is no food. Will you starve to death? Moses asks God to provide food for these hungry complaining people. God sends quail by the millions into the camp. The quail must have tasted so good but what about a little bread to eat? God sends manna from Heaven to feed all of you people. What is manna? No one really knows. The word, manna, means "What is it?"

God has been good to you. The years pass by until your grandparents, parents and relatives are now deceased. You are an adult with a spouse and children. You have not given up your hope for a new home in a new place. Moses calls everyone together to prepare them for entering the Promised Land. With the background of your appreciation for God's great provisions for you and your ancestors, you hear the great man, Moses, speak. You are asking yourself, "What does God want from us? What does God deserve?" You listen to Moses to hear what you and your family are to do to prepare for life in the new land.

What people 3,500 years ago heard, Moses preserved for us in an OT book called Deuteronomy, "second law." Did you know this book is also the OT book of love? Only the NT books of 1 John and the gospel of John mention the word "love" more than the book of Deuteronomy. Deut. 6: 4, 5 says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Deut. 7: 13 also say, "He (God) will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. A review of our fellow followers of God reminds us of God's great love for His people. While listening to Moses you ask yourself again, "What does God deserve for all His love to us?"

I have chosen an excerpt from one of Moses' sermons to explain how we express our love to God. This brief portion of Moses' training gives three instructions to us who want to express our love to God in response to His great love for us. God has done more for us than He did for ancient Israel. For that reason we love God with our worship.

## **I. LOVE GOD BY GIVING WHAT HE ASKS, Vv. 8-11**

- A. V. 8 - You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes.
  - 1. Israel is preparing to rest from their worship in a portable and elegant tent called a tabernacle.
  - 2. In the new land God's people will have a central place established for worship to obey God's command to worship Him.
  
- B. OT worship prepares God's people for the coming of Jesus Christ.
  - 1. The smoke arising from the sacrifices symbolized God's anger at sin but since Jesus died on the cross, God's anger is settled against those who accept Jesus as Savior.
  - 2. The tithe was given to symbolize that God deserves a tithe because God owns everything.
  - 3. The additional contributions went for those in need or to provide for the needy and the temple's maintenance.
  
- C. Applic.
  - 1. Ex. - The greatest challenge of the Christian life is not giving God what He wants. Our biggest challenge is to make and keep Jesus as my Lord. When I pray a prayer of surrender to God's will, my first temptation is to sit back and say, "God, do whatever. I will wait to see what You do." Surrender is not passive but stopping

what I think is best to do what God wants. Making Jesus our Lord means we become active and assertive for God.

2. We tend to think Jesus' sacrifice removed our responsibility to sacrifice for Christ.
  - a. Mark 8:34 "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."
  - b. I challenge you today to make Jesus your Lord giving God full ownership of your life, your family, and all you possess.
  - c. Jesus removed the sacrifice of animals for salvation but He raised the level of sacrifice for all followers of Christ after God saves us.
3. In this place the Jews would obey God's command to worship Him.
  - a. The Jewish followers would bring burnt offerings - grain and fruit offerings to God, and animal sacrifices for their sins.
  - b. These early followers of God gave tithes - one tenth of their income, contributions - gifts of money beyond the tithe, and votive offerings - gifts given from a pledge given.
  - c. The biblical instructions reveal a priority - give sacrifices first and contributions second.
4. We worship God realizing His great love for us.
  - a. Illus. - Two men went out in a boat to fish in the ocean. The boat capsized throwing them into the water. They swam and drifted to a forsaken island. One of the men sat down by a palm tree and waited. The other man paced nervously around the island. He cried and fussed. The other man remained calm. Finally, the upset man asked the other man why he could be so calm. He said, "I make \$100,000 per week and I tithe every Sunday. My preacher will find me."
  - b. God does not find us because we give an amount to Him or come to worship Him but God finds us first and then we ask God, "What do You want from me?"

## **II. LOVE GOD BY REJOICING BEFORE HIM, V. 12**

- A. You shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you, your sons and daughters, male and female servants, and the Levites who had no inheritance.
  1. Worship is rejoicing before God.
  2. Bring all the family with you.
  3. Bring all the servants with you.

B. Illus. - In his book, *Psalms of the Heart*, George Sweeting tells the story of the missionaries, John and Elaine Beekman. God called them to missionary work among the Chol Indians of southern Mexico. They rode mules and traveled by dugout canoes to reach this tribe. They labored 25 years with other missionaries to translate the New Testament into the language of the Chol Indians. More than 12,000 Chol Indian people became Christians. When the missionaries came, the Chol Indians didn't know how to sing. With the coming of the gospel, however, the believers in the tribe became known as "the singers". "They love to sing now," Sweeting commented, "because they have something to sing about." God gives reason to rejoice in our worship.

C. We have reasons to rejoice.

1. Our food supply is the most abundant in the world.
2. We are most advanced nation in technology.
3. Our government, as weak as it is, is the best in the world.
4. We have the best health care in the world though it is expensive.
5. We are a great church if you compare us with most of the struggling and weak churches in our nation.
6. Make your own list about why you rejoice.
7. God is still in the saving and changing business.

### **III. LOVE GOD BY WORSHIPING GOD ONLY, Vv. 13-14**

A. Emerson once wrote, *It behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshiping we are becoming.*

B. Illus. - James Michener, writing factious history in his book, *The Source*, tells the story of a man named Urbaal, who was a farmer living about 2200 B.C. He worshiped two gods, one a god of death, the other a goddess of fertility. One day, the temple priests tell Urbaal to bring his young son to the temple for sacrifice--if he wants good crops. Urbaal obeys, and on the appointed day drags his wife and boy to the scene of the boy's "religious execution" by fire to the god of death. After the sacrifice of Urbaal's boy, the priests announce that one of the fathers will spend next week in the temple with a new temple prostitute. Urbaal's wife is stunned as she sees him eagerly lunge forward when his name is called. The ceremony over, she

walks out of the temple with her head swimming, concluding "if he had different gods, he would have been a different man." Erwin Lutzer, Pastor to Pastor, p. 89.

- C. Applic. - We become like what we worship; greed, sex, prestige, or God.
1. Moses said to the Israelites; Vv. 13, 14 - Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every cultic place you see.
  2. The Canaanite Baal worshipers who lived in their future land were hopelessly corrupt.
    - a. The International Bible Standard Encyclopedia says, *If the summer was so dry the crops were destroyed a Baal worshiper might burn the firstborn child alive in a fire to worship Baal.* (Vol. 1, p. 345)
    - b. 2 Kings 16:3 – King Ahaz of Judah sacrificed his son to Baal.
- D. Applic. - God asks us to keep biblical faith free from pollution.
1. Resist mixing works into your salvation.
    - a. Two religions exist: salvation by works or salvation by grace.
    - b. Works salvation means each follower tries to earn a place in Heaven.
    - c. Grace salvation is being saved by the good works of someone else - Jesus' sinless life and His suffering and death on the cross to provide grace for us.
  2. Resist the temptation to corrupt biblical marriage.
    - a. The Canaanites practiced gross forms of immorality.
    - b. Biblical marriage is as old as time but as new as tomorrow.
    - c. Illus. - A psychologist, Nancy Clatworthy, concludes cohabitation is a major cause of marital breakups. Cohabiting couples practice conditional love which makes a list of conditions the other person must meet. After several months or years of practicing conditional love, a couple may get married but the conditional love is difficult to convert to unconditional love. Once the conditions for a breakup are met the couple will separate.
    - d. For Christian couples I refer them to Heb. 13:4 - Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.
  3. Resist the habit of profanity.
    - a. The Bible says - Do not use the Lord's name in vain.

- b. Profanity is a bad witness for Christ.
- c. Praise and worship is the opposite of profanity.
- d. In the NT, James 3:9ff - With the tongue we bless our God and Father, and with the tongue we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God . . . these things ought not to be.

**CONCLUSION** - This past Thursday was the seventh year anniversary of 911. One scene in that horrible catastrophe we can never forget. As people came pouring out of the Twin Towers, policemen and firemen were running into the towers to rescue people. Many of them died trying to rescue others. Jesus enters the world of God's judgment on the cross. Jesus lost His life for us but He regained it by His resurrection. For His rescue we express our love in worship.