

[Story] There was a man who was very angry because he had it in his head that someone stole his wallet. Since he believed that everyone comes to church with their wallet for giving, he decided to come to church to steal someone else's wallet. He sat in the service looking for an opportunity to take an action. However, his mind got changed as the service got progressed. He confessed to the priest after the service about his initial intention of coming to church that morning. The priest asked, "What made you change your mind?" The man said, "When you got to 'Thou shall not commit adultery' in your sermon on the Ten Commandments, I remembered where I left my wallet!"

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I have no control over what message you will take home with you after the service. The only thing I can control is what I will say. So, I would like to be clear up front that today's message is about worship. Today is Epiphany Sunday which is the first day of worship offered by three oriental kings, non-Jews, gentiles, right after the revelation of God in Jesus. They crossed the borderline of nations and cultures and came to the Lord with the heart of worship!

So, we begin this new year by bringing our heart of worship with a series of messages on worship acknowledging the awesomeness of God. Today, we start with the simple command, "Worship God" from Revelation 22:9. The angel said to John, when he fell down at the angel's feet, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God." In other words, don't worship angels, worship God! Don't worship anything else, but God! Don't neglect God or despise God, worship God! This is the last chapter of the Bible, and the last duty of humanity is worship God!

What I aim to do this morning is to provide a broad and brief overview of the New Testament by the way of introduction to the theme—Worship. Let me start by saying that there is no gathering called "Worship Services" in the New Testament even though the gatherings are mentioned (1 Corinthians 14:23; Acts 2:46; Hebrews 10:25). Let me illustrate this. In the Old Testament the most common Hebrew word used for worship is תפילה (*hishtahvah*). Its basic meaning is "bow down," with the sense of reverence, respect, and honor. In the Greek Old Testament, this Hebrew word got translated with the Greek word προσκυνέω

(*proskuneo*) and then λατρεύω (*latreuo*) in the letters to the churches in the New Testament.

In the Greek New Testament, this word προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*) is used as the main word for worship. This word is common in the gospels (26 times). People would often bow down worshipfully before Jesus. And it is common in the book of Revelation (21 times) because the angels and elders in heaven often bow down before God. But in the epistles of Paul it occurs only once, namely in 1 Corinthians 14:25 where the unbeliever falls down at the power of prophecy and confesses God is in the assembly. However, the central Old Testament word for worship, προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*), is virtually boycotted by Peter, James, John, and Paul in the letters they write to the churches. No προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*) can be found in the letters to the churches of the New Testaments because of Jesus who re-defines what true worship is.

In John 4:20-24 in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well about worship, Jesus uses the word προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*) and shows that it was laden with outward and localized meaning, and transforms it into a concept that is mainly inward rather than outward, and mainly pervasive rather than localized. What Jesus is doing here is stripping προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*)'s last vestiges of localized and outward connotation. Not that it will be wrong for worship to be in a place or to use outward forms, but rather he is making explicit and central that this is not what makes worship *worship*. What makes worship *worship* is what happens “in spirit and in truth”—with or without a place and with or without outward forms.

In the Epistles, the letters to the churches, the apostles take in Jesus' new definition of worship and deal with worship as primarily inward and spiritual rather than outward and ritualistic. Particularly Apostle Paul uses the word λατρεύω (*latreuo*) for worship which is usually translated as “serve,” as in Exodus 23:24: “You shall not worship their gods or serve them.”

When Paul uses it for Christian worship he goes out of his way to make sure that we know he means not a localized or outward form for worship practice but a non-localized, spiritual experience. In fact, he treats it virtually all of life as an act of worship when we reflect the value of God. The worship does not happen for an hour when we get together on Sunday, but every day. Our daily living is the worship of God when we reflect the value of God in remembering the mighty acts of God through Jesus Christ. *Consecration of the Lord's Table!*