

Series: **Worship** – week 2  
CDOBC – beginning on 1/10/16  
Today's Title: **“A New Era of Worship”**  
*January 17, 2016 ~ Selected verses*

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OBJECTIVE: To help believers understand worship is not tied to a location, building or specific liturgy – but it's tied to the person of Jesus.

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## Opening prayer

This is week #2 in our series on worship.

Today's message is titled: “A New Era of Worship”

Next Sunday we'll look at “Heavenly Worship” – and on Jan 31<sup>st</sup> our focus will be: “United in our Worship”.

Do you look at the past with great fondness – maybe even longing for those days?

I can remember growing up with great freedom throughout my childhood – a freedom that is foreign to many kids in today's world. I would stay outside all day on Saturday, playing with my friends, riding my bike to the park, and coming home when the street lights came on. My parents never expressed any fears of child abduction or the like.

It's no wonder we look at the world around us and long for the days of our youth – when life – when the world seemed to be a simpler and safer place.

I think the thoughts and feelings of ‘nostalgia’ is part of every generation who has ever lived.

Every generation has a sense that 40 years ago was a bit better – life was simpler – things were more orderly and more in control.

One writer said it this way:

“The phrase ‘*the good old days*’ appeared in print as early as 1726...One can imagine living in the Renaissance, longing for the simplicity of the Dark Ages.” (Sports Illustrated, July

6, 2015, article: “Good Ol’ Daze” by Steve Rushin, p. 124)

There is no doubt, our past is littered with good days.

I certainly wouldn’t want to live them all over again, but the joys of childhood and teenage years cause us to look back with great fondness at that time in our life.

There is nothing wrong with remembering the years of our youth and remembering the good times with our family and friends.

However, for some, the past takes on a life of it’s own – it becomes so romanticized in their memory and the present day becomes so polluted and hazardous they begin to reject everything about today – and they develop such a strong longing for the past – and they develop present-day bitterness and resentment. From the world of golf:

“The rapidity and ease of modern communication have made the world more compact,” - and this technology – to cite but one example – has muted the ‘warm, exuberant, social side of golf [that] was, perhaps, more noticeable in

the olden days.” As a result, “The modern golfer is a busier man than his prototype of old.” [Quote from Golf Illustrated in 1903!]

*(Golf Illustrated, 1903, quoted in: Sports Illustrated, July 6, 2015, article: “Good Ol’ Daze” by Steve Rushin, p. 124)*

Every generation struggles with the changes of life the next generation brings.

One of the tragic stories we read about in the O.T. is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the book of Judges, it says after Joshua and those of his generation died, “...another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what He had done for Israel.” **Judges 2:10**

If we’re so focused on our past that we refuse to live in the present, the next generation will grow up without the Lord!

Paul tells us:

“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. **15** All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.”

**Philippians 3:13-15**

This cuts both ways doesn’t it. No matter how good your past was, you can’t live in the past. No matter how bad your past was, it doesn’t define you today!

In another part of the O.T., we read about Esther and the horrific situation she was living in. There is no doubt her past was much better than her present situation!

Mordecai (her older cousin) had adopted Esther, and protected her as she grew up. However, when danger presented an

immanent threat to both Mordecai and Esther, he didn't help her reminisce about the past, but he told her:

“And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” **Esther 4:14**

It was no divine mistake or divine oversight that Esther lived during the years of Israelite captivity.

It is no divine mistake or divine oversight that you live here, in America – in 2016!

Fond memories are great...but don't resent today!

God has placed us here for a reason – we have a purpose:  
*Reach people for Christ and help them grow in their faith.*

Change is the one thing that stays the same for every generation.

And Jesus introduced drastic change!

The Jewish people were called out by God – chosen by God to represent Him to the nations. They were chosen not because of their merit – but solely because of His grace.

God commanded the Jewish people – the nation of Israel – to worship in a certain way – and at a certain place.

At first, this place was the Tabernacle which was a fancy tent the nation carried as they wandered in the Sinai desert for 40 years. When they settled in the Promised Land – the land of Canaan (modern-day Israel), the Tabernacle was set up in the town of Gilgal, then in Shiloh, and eventually the town of Gibeon.

Many years later, King Solomon built the first Temple – and for many centuries the nation was commanded to worship in the Temple and in the various Synagogues throughout the country.

So...for many centuries...location was a very important part of Israel's worship. The Tabernacle and the Temple were designated places for worship to take place. You could certainly worship God anywhere – but the Tabernacle and later the Temple had to be included throughout the year. This is not an unfamiliar thought today for many Christians. Most Christians think of the church building as the place worship occurs.

Turn with me to **John 4** – where Jesus meets a Samaritan woman – and shares with her about the New Era of Worship that stands before her.

**John 4:19-24** (Context: Amazing discussion – she realizes this is no ordinary man / Rabbi)  
“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” 21 Jesus declared, “Believe Me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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. 24 God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Jesus reveals an amazing new truth – a new era of worship – the era we live in today but so many are still stuck in the previous era!

The Samaritan woman brings up the hot-button issue of the centuries in Jewish and Samaritan circles. It's a question that has its roots 700 years before Jesus and this woman have this conversation.

When Israel (northern kingdom – brief history of divided kingdom) was defeated and taken captive by Assyria in 721 B.C., the Assyrians took most of the people as POW's and hauled them back to Assyria. They left the poor in the land, and Assyrians (along with other neighboring nations) came into the land and settled there. The result was the Israelites who were left in the land intermarried with the foreign people – and embraced much of their idol worship. This group of people became known as 'Samaritans' – named after their capital city of Samaria.

Other Jews who had not intermarried with foreigners despised the Samaritans as half-breeds and spiritually polluted. Due to this hostility, the Samaritans were not welcome to make the trip south and worship in the Temple in Jerusalem, so they began to worship on Mount Gerizim – and eventually built a Temple there. Their worship was a mixture of paganism and select rituals and ceremonies from Judaism.

Over the centuries, this division only grew and the hostility increased to the point that no respectable Jew traveling from Judah to Galilee would walk through Samaria – they would take a much longer route to walk around Samaria – so they wouldn't have to step foot on Samaritan land.

All of this history makes Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman even more amazing – and it tells us a great deal about God's heart for the lost. (4:4)

Let's look at these verses and see what Jesus says about this new era of worship.

**The old era: worship occurs at a specific place.** vs. 20-21

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

The Samaritan's worship was all messed up.

The Jews worship had the right object of worship – the one true God – but things were going to change even for the Jews.

Everyone was so locked in to a location – a place where worship was supposed to occur. For the Samaritans, their Temple on Mount Gerizim was the approved place for their worship.

For the Jews, the Temple in Jerusalem was the most sacred place for worship.

Jesus tells this woman (vs. 21) “...a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.”

This is a radical and revolutionary statement!

It's not a big jump for a Jewish Rabbi to say the Temple on Mount Gerizim is a bust...but to say the Temple in Jerusalem has outlived its purpose?!!

How do you look at worship today?

Do you see this place – this building – this campus – as the place worship occurs?

Jesus is saying, *“Don't believe worship is tied to a location – don't believe it's tied to a building.”*

We are getting ready to build a new sanctuary.

There is nothing sacred about the new sanctuary (or this one).

The place – the building is not holy and sacred.

It's the redeemed people of God who gather in the building who are holy and sacred!

**2 Corinthians 6:16** (Temple of the living God)

“For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

**1 Peter 2:9** (A chosen race, royal priesthood)

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people...”

There is nothing wrong with gathering at a location – in a wonderful worship space, as long as we don't confuse



the sacred inhabitants with the brick and mortar of a building.

**Jesus ushers in the new era of worship.** vs. 23

“Yet a time is coming and has now come...”

Jesus is the bridge from the O.T. sacrificial system to the new era of worship.

Jesus fulfilled the O.T. Law perfectly, but He also made certain aspects of the O.T. Law obsolete.

With Jesus, there is a new way to worship God.

When Jesus died on the cross, we read in Matthew 27:51 that the Temple veil – the veil that separated the holy of holies – the most sacred part of the Temple – this massive veil was torn in two from the top to the bottom – signifying 2 things: 1) It was God who tore the veil, and 2) Anyone could access God through Jesus.

Before this, only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies – the place in the Temple where the God’s presence was manifest. But now, anyone could approach God through Jesus.

Worship is no longer about a place – a priest – or religious practices and traditions.

Jesus has ushered in a new era of worship.

**The new era of worship is about a person, not a place.** vs. 21

Jesus declared, “Believe Me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.”

The location – the building was no longer a key ingredient to proper, God-pleasing worship. A new era had arrived where even the Jerusalem Temple would be obsolete and unnecessary.

This is why the Psalmist could write:

**Psalm 105:4**

“Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His presence continually!”

Looking back at the significance of Jesus – and the new era of worship Jesus ushered in, the writer of Hebrews said:

**Hebrews 10:19-22** (Insufficient means of O.T. system – confidence we have in Jesus)

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, **21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”

Jesus is the key to our worship – not a place...not a building...not even the rituals of Mosaic Law that had been in existence for centuries!

*“After centuries of God warning His people not to draw close without the proper sacrifices, God now cries out through the blood of Jesus, His Son, “Come near!” His once-for-all sacrifice has thrown open the door to the throne room of God...Through Jesus, and Jesus alone,*

*we now have free access by the Spirit into the Father's presence.*” (True Worshipers, by Bob Kauflin, p. 47-48)

True worship – worship God desires – is worship that elevates His Son, Jesus.

We worship who Jesus is and what He has done through His atoning and wrath-satisfying death, burial and resurrection.

We worship Jesus for what He will do in the future.

What is your focus – who is your focus in worship?

Are you focused only on Sundays – on a building – and focused on style, preferences or traditions?

Our worship must be Christ-centric.

Don't allow other things – even other important things – to take the focus off of Jesus.

**Worship is both personal and communal.** vs. 23-24

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. 24 God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

***Worship is Personal:***

This is the primary point when Jesus says, “...true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit”.

Your worship must be connected to your “spirit”.

This word translated “spirit” in vs. 23 & 24 is the human spirit – your ‘heart’ - the inner person.

Your worship must be much more than external things – it must come from your heart. Location is no longer the primary concern – nor is the practice, traditions or ritual of your worship. Your worship must be from the inside-out. David said in **Psalm 45:1** “My heart is stirred by a noble theme...”

**Psalm 103:1**

“Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name.”

Don't show up and go robotically through the motions of worship and think you are pleasing God.

You must have a humble heart, a heart centered on Christ, an undivided heart and repentant heart.

***At the same time our Worship is Communal:***

Our worship is not to be independent and isolated from other believers (although it may be this at times).

Notice the plural: “worshippers” (vs. 23-24). You could take the plural to mean there will many people worshiping God by themselves in their own home in total privacy. But the rest of Scripture – both the O.T. and N.T. clearly teach the importance of believers gathering together on a regular basis for worship.

The big difference is the location is not important any longer – it's the people gathered at the location which is the important thing!

**Hebrews 10:25**

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

**Psalm 111:1**

“Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.”

Many truths in Scripture point to worship as a communal event for believers to attend and participate in!

We serve a triune God – God is communal

**Genesis 2:18a**

“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone...”

**Exodus 19:6a** (Kingdom of priests and a holy nation, the O.T. festivals)

“...and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

The church is called to live life together – “One Another”

*“God doesn’t give us a choice about whether we want to be in the church. If we’re Christians, we’re already part of the family. The question then becomes where and how we work out the details of family life.”*

(True Worshipers, by Bob Kauflin, p. 72-73)

*“We meet together as redeemed saints to remind each other whose we are, how we got here, and why it matters.”*

(True Worshipers, by Bob Kauflin, p. 73)

**Psalm 34:3** (exalt God’s name together)

“Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt His name together.”

**Psalm 35:18**

“I will give You thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise You.”

See also: 1 Corinthians 14:26 (benefits of meeting together)

**Worship is anchored in biblical truth.** vs. 23-24

“His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

The primary issue is not location, practice, style, ritual, tradition, or your sincerity – it is truth.

Personal sincerity – a person’s sincere intentions do not change the leading role of truth.

The Samaritans worshiped in spirit, but no truth – the Jews worshiped in truth, but they had no spirit / no heart in their worship!

Your feelings and emotions – the sincerity of your worship must be grounded / anchored in the truth of Scripture – or your worship is false worship and you become the idol and object of your worship.

In the same way, your worship must not be anchored in familiar practices or traditions – it must be anchored in truth. John Calvin (1509-1564) wrote in his Institutes, book 4, 10:30

*“...the Master [Jesus] alone is to be heard. But because He did not will in outward discipline and ceremonies to prescribe in detail what we ought to do (because he foresaw that this depended on the state of the times, and he did not deem one form suitable for all ages) . . . Because he has taught*

*nothing specifically, and because these things are not necessary to salvation, and for the upbuilding of the church ought to be variously accommodated to the customs of each nation and age, it will be fitting (as the advantage of the church will require) to change and abrogate traditional practices and to establish new ones. Indeed, I admit that we ought not to charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, for insufficient cause. But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; and if we let love be our guide, all will be safe.”*

(The Institutes, by John Calvin, book 4, 10:30 *Bondage and Freedom of Church Constitutions*)

When Jesus ushered in a new era of worship, He did not prescribe a location or a specific form or practice.

He did prescribe that we worship “in spirit and in truth.”

### **Apply it...**

Engage your spirit / your heart when you worship.

Engage your mind with God’s truth when you worship.

Focus on the person of Christ, not a place or practice.

Worship is not about unrestrained or ungrounded enthusiasm – nor should it be lifeless ritual or tradition. Engage your spirit/heart – and engage your mind with God’s truth – Focus on Jesus Christ... and be a worshiper the Heavenly Father is seeking!

Close in prayer