

**What is True Worship?<sup>1</sup>**

April 8th, 2014, Kichijouji Bible Study  
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**John 4**

23 Yet the time is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Indeed, the Father is looking for people like that to worship him.

24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

**Matthew 14**

24 By this time the boat was in the middle of the sea and was being battered by the waves, because the wind was against them.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus came to them, walking on the sea.

26 When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and cried out, "It's a ghost!" And they screamed in terror.

27 "Have courage!" Jesus immediately told them. "It's me. Stop being afraid!"

28 Peter answered him, "Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water."

29 Jesus said, "Come on!" So Peter got down out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came to Jesus.

30 But when he noticed the strong wind, he was frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, "Lord, save me!"

31 At once Jesus reached out his hand, caught him, and asked him, "You who have so little faith, why did you doubt?"

32 As they got into the boat, the wind stopped blowing.

There is an expression 'true worshipers' in these two verses 23 and 24 of John, chapter 4. Where there is something true, there is always the presence of the fake as well. If there is nothing true, the fake cannot exist either. While there are true worshipers, some people just worship superficially. But, true worshipers are always sought (by the Lord).

Jesus says "now is the time, not day after tomorrow." Some verses of the Book of Revelations explain what will come in future. This begins from chapter 4. But it is more clearly explained starting from chapter 5, verse 12; this is the true worship;

**Revelation 5**

12 They sang with a loud voice, "Worthy is the lamb

1 『まことの礼拝とは何か』、2014年4月8日、吉祥寺学び会、ゴットホルド・ベック

who was slaughtered to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and praise!"

'The worthy one' is nobody but Jesus, who sacrificed himself on the cross.

**Revelation 5**

13 I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and on the sea, and everything that is in them, saying, "To the one who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praise, honor, glory, and power forever and ever!"

14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!", and the elders bowed down and worshiped.

The devil not only understands the importance of worship, but himself wants to be respected and worshiped in all aspects. I guess that is what he cares about. We can see it from Matthew, chapter 4;

**Matthew 4**

8 Once more the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, along with their splendor.

9 He told Jesus, "I will give you all these things if you will bow down and worship me!"

10 Then Jesus told him, "Go away, Satan! Because it is written, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

Had the devil been worshiped at this time, the world would have ended. There would have been no one who worshiped with spirit and truth today.

One of the most important persons in the Old Testament is, needless to say, David. He was never a perfect man, but he satisfied the will of God. So says the Bible repeatedly. Why?

It was because he was a man of worship. We can find his confession and testimony in the Second Samuel, chapter 22;

**2 Samuel 22**

47 The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock, and may my God be exalted, the Rock who is my salvation!

This is a wonderful confession. I guess after all, true worship is to have an attitude like this. For me, one of the most important confessions of David is in chapter 29 of the First Chronicles. This truly was a wonderful confession. It would be great if we can pray this way every day;

**1 Chronicles 29**

10 How blessed you are, Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, from eternity to eternity!

11 To you, Lord, belongs the greatness, and the valor, and the splendor, and the endurance, and the majesty because all that is in heaven and on earth is yours. To you belongs the kingdom, Lord, and you are exalted as head over all.

12 Both wealth and honor proceed from you, and you are ruling over them all. You control power—you control who is made great, and how everyone becomes strong.

13 And so, our God, we are giving you thanks, and we are praising your wonderful name!

He was recognized as the one who pleased God because of this attitude. Worshiping the Lord is the most important thing for us. But then, what is true worship? Those who understand Jesus and fall down on their faces before him, those who accept that their unexplainable agony is the road to reach the Lord and it is intended by him, will all be led to the true worship.

Jesus is seeking for true worshipers who worship with spirit and truth. In actuality, our whole life itself should consist of true worship to the Lord.

It is said that the disciples of Jesus came to worship the Lord. Let's go back to Matthew, chapter 14 which we read at the beginning, where it is stated;

Matthew 14

24 By this time the boat was in the middle of the sea and was being battered by the waves, because the wind was against them.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus came to them, walking on the sea.

26 When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and cried out, "It's a ghost!" And they screamed in terror.

27 "Have courage!" Jesus immediately told them. "It's me. Stop being afraid!"

"It's me. Stop being afraid." Jesus is still telling us the same today. "It is not coincidence. It is not your fate. It is me." The disciples of Jesus were drifting far from the shore in the middle of a storm, fighting the raging waves. Then, they saw a strange figure approaching them, which made them terrified.

They would have felt secure if they knew it was Jesus, but they believed it was a ghost. However, it was not a ghost. It was Jesus. "Have courage! It's me. Stop being afraid!" Jesus revealed himself so that the disciples could understand him. And understanding Jesus is the basis of worship to the Lord.

Matthew 14

33 Then the men in the boat began to worship Jesus, saying, "You certainly are the Son of God!"

After all, they began to worship. Let us read some other verses. This is regarding a King called Manasseh;

2 Chronicles 33

10 The Lord kept on speaking to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention to him,

If you don't have ears to hear, then you have no hope. He paid no attention to the Lord and consequently, the Lord had to bring in the army commanders who worked for the king of Assyria. It was the intention of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 33

11 so the Lord brought in the army commanders who worked for the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him in bronze chains, and took him off to Babylon.

12 But when he was in trouble, he sought the face of the Lord his God, humbled himself magnificently before the God of his ancestors,

13 and prayed to him. Moved by Manasseh's entreaties, the Lord heard his supplications and brought him back to his kingdom in Jerusalem.

That's how Manasseh learned that the Lord is God.

He must have worshiped this God. How could Manasseh know the Lord? It was through a series of ordeals. He was captured with hooks, bound in bronze chains, and taken off to Babylon, to the nation of his enemies. Through troubles, through an unexplainable guidance, the eyes of his heart finally opened. And through his own experience, he learned that the Lord is God.

How can we become true worshipers? It is important to have knowledge that the Lord is our father in heaven, and we are children of this great Lord.

We need to understand the Lord as the one who governs all things. To know the Lord is to realize that you thoroughly belong to the Lord and that everything you possess belongs to him. Only those who understand the Lord as their Lord can worship him with spirit and truth. When the disciples of Jesus heard the voice of the Lord on the raging waves, that is to say, when the Lord manifested himself to them, they understood it was the Lord and of course, began to worship him.

When the King Manasseh realized that it was the guidance of the Lord, he understood (the intention of) the Lord. When people know the Lord and fall down on their faces before him, when they recognize that all the unreasonable suffering and agony they are facing

comes from the Lord and it is the road that connects them to the Lord, they will be led to true worship.

Today, the Lord still stays beside us, looking for and seeking true worshipers who worship him with spirit and truth.

Then, what is worship? What I can say is that it is to express total appreciation for the way of the Lord and accept his guidance wholeheartedly. It is to cast everything to the intention of the Lord. We can say that true worship is to entrust yourself to the way of the Lord.

The Lord's guidance and all things that he does are the road that connects us to him. The Lord wants us to open our eyes to him through all the things he does, his guidance and our own experience; and consequently, he wants us to be compelled to worship him spontaneously from our hearts. This is how the Lord works on us. Only those who worship the Lord wholeheartedly can proceed on the road to the Lord. To find the road to the Lord and rejoice on the road of the Lord is the most important task given to us, isn't it?

When this task actually comes along, we can no longer question the Lord as to 'why' or 'how' (about anything). Those who ask the Lord why are the ones who do not look up to the Lord, and they cannot give true worship. The Bible tells us about Moses;

#### Exodus 34

5 The Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

6 The Lord passed in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and filled with gracious love and truth.

7 He graciously loves thousands, and forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. But he does not leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the ancestors on their children, and on their children's children to the third and fourth generation."

8 Moses quickly bowed to the ground and prostrated himself in worship.

9 He said, "If I've found favor in your sight, Lord, please, Lord, walk among us. Certainly this is an obstinate people, but pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your own inheritance."

This was the heartfelt desire of Moses. It is written that "the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and filled with gracious love and truth. He graciously loves thousands, and forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin." When Moses heard these gracious words, he was compelled to worship the Lord

from the core of his heart.

However, along with these gracious words, Moses also heard some harsh ones as in the latter half of verse 7; "he does not leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the ancestors on their children, and on their children's children to the third and fourth generation." When he heard this, Moses worshiped the Lord before begging for forgiveness for his sins in front of the Lord.

It is written that "Moses quickly bowed to the ground and prostrated himself in worship." It is not so difficult to worship the Lord because of his grace and truth. It is mostly very easy. However, it is not easy to still worship the Lord even after listening to such harsh words of instruction. It is a very difficult thing to do.

What is worship after all? As I just mentioned, it is to express your total and wholehearted appreciation for the guidance of the Lord. Very often we hope, desire and pray, "Lord, please give me your guidance this way. Please lead me that way. Please change the situation I am in." It may not be totally wrong. But it is nothing but a prayer. There is something more important than prayers. It is to worship.

Prayer is merely an expression of what you want, after all. Worship is to cast everything to the Lord. Jesus took this attitude all the time. Before he was crucified, he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. We can find the words of his prayer in chapter 26 of the Gospel according to Matthew. It was a wonderful prayer.

#### Mathew

26:39 Going on a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed, "O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not what I want but what you want."

As we can see from this confession, the prayer of Jesus was not just an expression of his wish, but rather, it was true worship. We can see it in the line, "not what I want but what you want."

The most remarkable king in the history of Israel after Moses was, needless to say, David.

#### 2 Samuel 12

13 At this point, David told Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan responded to David, "There's one other thing: the Lord has forgiven your sin. You won't die.

14 Nevertheless, because you have despised the Lord's enemies with utter contempt, the son born to you will most certainly die."

15 Then Nathan went home. After this, the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife had born to

David, and the child became very ill.

16 David begged God on behalf of the youngster. He fasted, went inside, and spent the night lying on the ground.

17 His closest advisors at the palace got up, remained with him, and tried to help him get up from the ground, but he would not do so. He also wouldn't eat with them.

18 A week later, the child died, and David's staff was afraid to tell him that the child had died. They were telling themselves, "Look, when the child was still alive, we talked to him but he wouldn't listen to what we said. Now what kind of trouble will he bring on himself if we tell him that the child has died?"

19 But as David observed his staff whispering together, he perceived that the child had died, so he asked his staff, "Is the child dead?" They replied, "He has died."

20 At this, David got up from the ground, washed, anointed himself, changed his clothes, and went into the Lord's tent to worship. Then he went back to his palace where, at his request, they served him food and he ate.

The Bible says that David was the one who pleased the Lord. But why was that? It was because he was the true worshiper who praised the Lord. As we can see from the Psalms, which consists of the songs he wrote, that even in the deepest abyss of pain, even when he was groaning in extreme desperation, even when he was facing pitch darkness and there seemed to be no way out, he fully concentrated on worshipping the Lord.

The guidance of the Lord does not always match our desire. That was the case for David. These harsh words were thrown at David, who pleased the Lord; "the son born to you will most certainly die."

David, who loved his child, begged God, fasted, and prayed lying on the ground. However, according to the Bible, the child still died. Most people, if they were put into a situation like this, would wonder why and try to find some reason. Instead, David entered the temple of the Lord and worshiped, as is written.

Finally, why don't we look at another man who worshiped the Lord? It was a man called Job.

Job 1

13 Some time later, when his children were celebrating in their oldest brother's house,  
14 a messenger approached Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the female donkeys were grazing nearby

15 when the Sabeans attacked, captured the servants, and killed them with swords. I alone

escaped to tell you!"

16 While this messenger was still speaking, another came and announced, "A lightning storm struck and incinerated the flock and the servants while they were eating. I alone escaped to tell you!"

17 While this messenger was still speaking, another came and announced, "The Chaldeans formed three companies, raided the camels, captured the servants, and killed them with swords. Only I alone escaped to tell you."

18 While this messenger was still speaking, another came and announced, "Your children were celebrating in their oldest brother's house

19 when a strong wind came straight out of the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on the young people, and they died. I alone escaped to tell you!"

20 Then Job stood up, tore his robe, shaved his head, fell to the ground, bowed very low,  
21 and exclaimed: "I left my mother's womb naked, and I will return to God naked. The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken. May the name of the Lord be blessed."

22 Job neither sinned nor charged God with wrongdoing in all of this.

All Job's wealth was taken away and all his ten beloved children died. Many people must have wondered; He serves the Lord so faithfully. Why does this man have to suffer so much? But, let's look at what Job did. It is written that Job worshiped. "May the name of the Lord be blessed", so he confessed.

It is a wonderful confession, isn't it? We need to learn to follow the path of the Lord. But this can be done by nothing but worshipping God. Job testified several thousand years ago; "As for me, I know that my Vindicator is alive." As I just mentioned, Job lost all his property, wealth and treasures as well as all his children. He even lost his own health in just a few days.

However, he neither complained nor accused God. He never doubted the perfect love of the Lord. Though he could not understand (the meaning of) the guidance of God, he worshiped the Lord with these words; "God, my Creator, gives me songs in the night. The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken. May the name of the Lord be blessed. As for me, I know that my Vindicator is alive."

As I said previously, David committed sins while, according to the Bible, Job was a righteous man in front of the Lord. However, they both denied themselves and entrusted everything to the Lord. They never received an answer to the question 'why?' Nevertheless, they realized that even though they

could not understand at all, the only thing important was to praise the Lord wholeheartedly and to worship.

“Lord, you are always perfect. Your deeds are righteous. Your guidance is perfect too. I worship you wholeheartedly even when I cannot understand you.” If you can take this attitude, you are truly blessed. To worship is to cast everything to the Lord whatever his intention is. It is to entrust yourself to the way of the Lord.

End