

The Final Stages of Israel's Apostasy
Lesson 4 - A Worship that left the Heart Untouched
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Introduction: There is a well defined path for a people to forget God.

- A. There is an age old battle about the nature of worship. Will it be God-centered or man-centered? (**Jer 25:6-7**)
 - 1. The essence of the battle can be defined by the battle between flesh and spirit. (**Rom 8:5-8**)
 - 2. Worldly people will have certain tastes and spiritual people will be different!
 - 3. Worldly people like worldly ways and worldly wisdom. (**1 Jn 4:5-6**)
- B. A sure sign of a falling away from God is when worship becomes centered upon man's flesh (desires).
 - 1. The idol worship of Jeremiah's day was popular, considered modern and intelligent and would easily keep one's attention.
 - 2. What it spectacularly failed to do was impact the heart for the true God.

I. Worship must come from a reverence for God and His word

- A. What is worship? (**Jn 4:23-24**)
 - 1. **proskune, w** - proskuneo (Verb) - from a basic sense *bow down to kiss* someone's feet, garment hem, or the ground in front of him; (2) in the NT of worship or veneration of a divine or supposedly divine object, expressed concretely with falling face down in front of someone *worship, venerate, do obeisance to*; - **Friberg Dictionary**
 - 2. God is the audience and to Him worship must be found to be acceptable. (**Lev 2:2; Mal 1:9**)
 - 3. God's desire is to have a people that "cling" to Him for "renown, praise and glory." (**Jer 13:10-11**)
- B. Worship must be based on an acceptable relationship with Him.
 - 1. It is the people that ultimately God finds acceptable. (**Ezk 20:40-41**)
 - 2. If the heart is untouched then the worship is vain. (**Mt 15:8-9**)
 - 3. Do worldly men desire a worship that challenges them to change?
- C. Without reverence for God worship becomes boring and "traditional" and must be changed. (**Mal 1:13**)
 - 1. Israel changed worship by making their nationality and the place of the temple the key for acceptable worship. (**Jer 7:2-7**)
 - 2. That was a lot easier than "amending your ways."

II. Worship must pierce and challenge man's rebellious heart

- A. Since the purpose of worship is to place ourselves before God, then that act will cause our hearts to be exposed. (**1 Cor 14:24-25**)
 - 1. True worship is both painful and joyful.
 - 2. Worship helps us see the unseen and put life in its proper place. (**Ps 73:16-17**)

- B. Worship cannot take place unless the ear is open to God's word. (**Jer 26:1-6**)
1. "Do not diminish a word." Respect for the word of God is key.
 2. Basic reverence for God causes us to stand *only* in what He teaches.
 3. Consider what Jesus taught about handling God's word. (**Mt 4:4; Jn 5:19; 8:28**)
 4. It is basic reverence to God that *we do nothing* when God's word is silent!
 5. In both Old and New Testament worship had to be chosen (authorized) by God.
- C. How did Jehoiakim, king of Judah, react? (**Jer 26:20-24**)
1. He hated anyone who showed him his heart.
 2. With great zeal he hunted down and killed one faithful prophet. He especially wanted to kill Jeremiah.
 3. God gave Jehoiakim His word in a scroll. (**Jer 36:1-3, 20-25**)
 4. The people reacted like their leaders. (**Jer 11:19-21**)

III. Israel's substitutes for worship

- A. Loving and emotional experience. (**Ezk 8:13-16**)
1. Emotional religion that blocks out the rebuke of God's word and appeals to the emotions is what Israel loved.
 2. Emotions often are produced apart from reason.
- B. Loving an able speaker. (**Ezk 33:30-33**)
1. There is nothing wrong with eloquence.
 2. How many today love men who speak but their hearts are unchanged from the message?
- C. Loving false prophets that spoke "their language." (**Jer 8:8-9**)
- D. Assuming they already knew what God wanted. (**Jer 42:1-6**)
1. Men in their pride commonly assume they already know what God wants.
 2. What was the reaction of these flattering men when they heard a message that they did not want to hear? (**Jer 43:1-2**)

IV. God's appeal to Israel for acceptable worship

- A. The message is simple and powerful. (**Jer 5:19-31**)
1. Fear God and listen to Him.
 2. Repent of your sin and become right with God.
 3. Treat your fellow man with love and service.
- B. What's in your heart? Is your worship acceptable?
1. They did not listen to their "own hurt." (**Jer 25:3-8**)
 2. Worship is the path to seeing God and being molded into His image.

Questions to Consider:

1. Upon what basis will a man seek to worship God acceptably?
2. What is worship? How does reverence for God direct our worship?
3. What are the keys to identifying acceptable worship?
4. What substitutes did Israel make for worship? How do men today make substitutes?
5. What happens to a people who cease worshipping God acceptably?