

March 13, 2005 PM

**THE CENTRALITY OF WORSHIP
FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD
HAGGAI 1.1–2.9**

1. WORSHIP IS CENTRAL TO THE LIFE OF GOD'S PEOPLE

In the Scriptures worship and life are inexorably bound together. In order to see these connections you must follow the God's story all the way through. As you do you will see that the entire story of creation and re-creation (or redemption) is the story of worship.

Man created in the image of God:

The Garden: that which God planted and in which he placed man who was created in his own image. The Garden is "the center of the world" as concerns God's purposes for the world.

The Garden was on a mountain from which a river flowed from the top, traversed through the Garden, and then split into four rivers (cf. Gen 2.10ff.). From this Garden the entire world would be watered; i.e., life would flow from the Garden to the world.

The two trees on which the story focuses are in the midst (i.e., middle) of the Garden. One was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The other was the Tree of Life. The names of these trees indicate their nature and purpose.

Note the Tree of Life: God would grant *life* through the fruit of this tree (cf. Ge 3.22). (This does not mean that life was inherent within the tree itself or its fruit. But what God declared would be would be. Remember, this is the One who created all things *by his word*. His word makes things what they are.)

The Tree of Life was not forbidden. This tree was sacramental; it was a place of worship. It was the place they would be changed from "glory to glory." ("Perfect" does not mean immutable in the case of the creature here. The fall disproves that notion.)

As Adam and Eve came to the Tree of Life and received what God had for them, they would grow and mature as God's image-bearers. Their worship would define their existence. Worship would determine how they would live in the world.

The biblical principle that is fleshed out throughout the rest of Scripture is operative here: you become like that which you worship. Cf. Ps 115.8; Rom 1.18ff.

There is no life inherent within any created thing. To go to the creation—whether it is in the form of wooden or metal idols, the constellations, animals, or whatever—is to go to something that does not have life inherent within itself. It is a dependent creature. Consequently, you will die. In order to live life the way God intends it, in order to be truly human, you must be a worshiper of God. Worship molds and shapes the way your life will be lived. Failure in worship will have disastrous results.

Note: you *are* a worshiper. You *will* worship. There is no option at this point. The question is, What or who will you worship? This worship—whether it be of God or creation—will shape the way you live and will reveal your destiny: life or death.

Distortion of the image: Man chose to believe (and, thus, worship) the creature over the Creator. Death is the result. The image of God is twisted and distorted in man. He no longer relates as he ought to God and others.

Restoration of the image: restoration = God intended to make for himself a man(kind) who would be true worshipers.

Begins in Ge 3.15. As this promise unfolds, we hear the distinctions drawn between the two seeds in terms of their worship. E.g. Cain and Abel (cf. Heb 11.4); Seth (Ge 4.26); Noah (Ge 8.20); Abraham (cf. e.g., Ge 12.7; 13.4); Isaac (cf. e.g., Ge 26.25); Jacob (cf. e.g., Ge 33.20)

Altar-building: the establishment of the worship of God in these places. The altar is built first, then every other part of life in that region flows from that.

Sinai: the ten words - another holy mountain; people of God are established as a priestly nation.

- First Word/Commandment - single-hearted devotion to God.
- Second Word - prescriptions for how God will and will not be worshiped.
- Third Word - will not worship hypocritically.
- Fourth Word - special time set aside for worship.

The second table of the law flows from the first. Proper worship determines how we relate to others.

Sinai: prescriptions for the tabernacle:: The tabernacle would be a moveable holy mountain (i.e., a place where God's people meet him and from which life would flow out to the world).

The Temple is established on Mt. Zion, this becomes the center for the life of the people of God, and, therefore, the entire world. The prophets prophesy of the great new creation that is coming when the law will go out from Zion and the people will flood into God's holy mountain (cf. e.g., Isa 2.1-4; Mic 4.1-4). Prophecies fulfilled (cf. Gal 4; Heb 12.18ff.)

The Father *seeks* worshipers (cf. John 4.23-24). The promise of the NC is that the Gentiles will come in and worship (cf. Rom 15).

2. WORSHIP IS CENTRAL TO THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD

Worship is where history begins: begins in the Garden at two trees. First full day of existence of man is seventh day; the day of rest and worship.

The rest of history is the story of worship; whether proper or improper, whether true or false. History moves in terms of worship.

This is seen again in all of the events that take place that hinge upon the worship of God's people. When God's people worship God properly, God goes before them, defeats their enemies, and they enjoy covenant blessings. When God's people turn to worship the idols of the nations, God comes against them, defeats them, and they endure covenant curses.

Note Adam and Eve; the people of Israel. False worship brings death. True worship brings life.

The worship of Jesus Christ is the center of history: Christ is the Supreme Worshiper. Context of "atonement" is worship

What Jesus Christ did at the cross, and what God said about him in the resurrection, is the pattern of worship. God condemned sin in the flesh and then vindicated his true Son in the resurrection. God took care of the problem of sin through death and brought the life that he intended from the beginning.

It is this act of worship—death and resurrection—that was the turning point of history. It is here that history turned the corner, as it were. It is here that the old creation died and the new creation came to life. The supreme act of worship by Jesus Christ was, and remains, the center of history; determining the course of history from that point forward.

The worship of God's people shapes history still: Cf. e.g., Rev 8.1-5 - The skeletal sequence: God's word is revealed. God's people pray/worship. Those prayers are then "used" to bring judgment upon the unbelieving world. The worship of God's people is shaping the way history unfolds.

Worship is where history culminates: Cf. Rev 21-22; 'already-not yet' tension. This scene show what is and what will be true.

The ambiguity between the already inaugurated kingdom and the not yet consummated kingdom only strengthens my point about worship. The continuity between what goes on now and what it will all look like in the future means that worship will remain central to the history of the people of God; even when history as we know it ceases.

There will never be a time in eternity at which point we cease being worshipers of God. It is our reason for existence. Worship is the way we live.

[Note: there is a river that flows from the throne of God, God's holy mountain, that brings life to the world.]

Application: (1) We need to carefully examine our attitudes and actions concerning worship on the Lord's Day.

Application: (2) Since worship is central to our lives, the life of the church, and the life of the world, it is of utmost necessity that we learn to worship biblically (i.e., the way God prescribes).