

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: “ ‘I Will Be Regarded As Holy’ ” (Colossians 2:18-23, Leviticus 9:22-10:3)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 8/5/2012

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Dear friends, in our last two messages we briefly examined the ungodly state of worship in much of the Evangelical church in our time. Our standard for that examination was nothing more or less than the Word of God. We saw that there is an epidemic of false worship, un-Biblical worship, in large segments of the nominally Evangelical church today. We also examined ten of the false precepts, the lies, which are driving the counterfeit worship that has come to dominate the Evangelical landscape in our day.

We have been focusing on this subject of worship because it is a major focus of the passage we are presently studying in the book of Colossians chapter two. Let me read that passage for you once again, and I trust you will follow along in your own Bible if you are able. Colossians chapter two, beginning at verse eighteen:

Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head [that is, to our Lord Jesus Christ], from whom all the body [that is the entire true Church of Christ], nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all

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concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Colossians 2:18-23)

Worship Is A Doctrinal Matter

Counterfeit worship is one of the forms by which Satan introduces man-made doctrines into the church. In the time of the Colossian church, the error of counterfeit worship took the form of efforts by men, who were influenced by paganism, to introduce the worship of angels into the church.

But the principle that is set forth in this part of the Word of God applies not only to the problem we find in the Colossian church two thousand years ago. It also applies equally to the heresies regarding worship that we find in the church today. The principle is this: The infinitely holy God of the universe must be worshipped according to God's specifications, not sinful man's specifications. You cannot bring anything you want from the world into the church, put a religious label on it, and call it worship.

And that is because the Bible gives us a doctrine of worship. It gives us a doctrine of worship just as surely and just as clearly as the Bible gives us a

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doctrine of creation, a doctrine of sin, and a doctrine of salvation. Biblical worship is a matter of sound doctrine. Counterfeit worship is a matter of false doctrine.

Counterfeit Worship: Part of a Deadly Package

And dear friends, false doctrines concerning worship will not stand alone. False doctrine spreads like cancer. It may begin with the introduction of man-made doctrines concerning worship, but if it is not stopped it will spread to other areas. In fact, we can say on the authority of God's Word that when we see counterfeit worship in a church it is a key indicator of the fact that that church has deeper and wider doctrinal problems.

I could give you many examples of this, but let me give you just one that I trust will drive this point home. Just this week I receive a copy of one of the magazines that is promoting counterfeit worship in the Evangelical church. The magazine is called *Worship Leader*. *Worship Leader*. In this magazine was an article by a man named Glenn Packiam (PACK-ee-am). Mr. Packiam is the pastor of a large church in Colorado. He is a leader in promoting false worship, not only in the United States but also in other parts of the world.

In this particular magazine article Mr. Packiam was writing about the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Within the space of a few hundred words, this nominally Evangelical pastor, this promoter of false worship, showed that he and his church have far deeper problems. Here are some of the points in his article.

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First, he denied that the sacrifices of the Old Testament were to propitiate the wrath of God concerning sin. He denied that the sacrifices of the book of Leviticus were sacrifices for sin. Dear friends, God uses the word “sin” 115 times in the book of Leviticus. Nothing could be more clear than the fact that the sacrificial system was a system of sacrifices to appease the wrath of God because of sin.

Secondly, he said that Jehovah God did not, as he put it, “invent” animal sacrifices. He said that they were the invention of earlier pagan religions. He said that Jehovah God merely took that pagan invention and brought it into the worship of the nation of Israel in the tabernacle.

Thirdly, he said that the account of God’s calling upon Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac as a test of faith was a “legend.” Not a literal account.

In this article, in a magazine on worship, an article that focused on the book of Leviticus, that focused on the tabernacle and the sacrificial system, this pastor ignored the fact that Leviticus chapter ten records one of God’s most important statements about worship.

At the very inception of the tabernacle worship, two of God’s ordained priests, the sons of Aaron, brought that which was not ordained of God, brought that which was of the sinful world, into the worship of Jehovah God.

And in so doing, the sons of Aaron opened the floodgate of God’s wrath against them. Jehovah God in his holy wrath struck them dead on the spot. This was

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serious business. And Moses recognized why God had done this, Leviticus chapter ten, verse three:

And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me, I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.’ ” So Aaron held his peace.

Moses and Aaron both understood what the pastor who wrote this magazine article obviously does not understand – that God must be worshipped as the holy God. He must be worshipped in the beauty of holiness. He must be worshipped in spirit and in truth – truth unmingled with the world’s lies about what constitutes acceptable worship.

Obviously this pastor does not understand that. He does not submit to that. And therefore he is not only teaching falsehood about worship. He is teaching falsehood about Christ, and the Bible, and the Gospel.

Now dear friends, this pastor’s church has a website. And on that website is a doctrinal statement. And part of that doctrinal statement says this:

We affirm that the Bible containing the Old and New Testaments is the infallible and inspired Word of God, and that its authority is ultimate and final and eternal. It cannot be added to, subtracted from, or superseded in any regard. The Bible is the source of all doctrine, instruction, and correction.

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Now dear friends, this is why you must be especially careful in choosing a church today. It is a sad thing to say, but we live in a time when you cannot take a church's doctrinal statement at face value. You must test the reality of it.

This pastor, this man who wrote this article about the Old Testament sacrifices in a magazine on worship, this man obviously does not believe that the Word of God is the Word of God. He says the Bible contains myths. He denies the Bible's authority. His church's doctrinal statement says that the Bible "cannot be added to, subtracted from, or superseded in any regard."

But in this one magazine article he proceeds to do exactly that. He adds paganism to the Bible's God-ordained worship. He subtracts the doctrine of sin, and the doctrine of God's holy wrath because of sin. And he supersedes the Bible's doctrine of worship by introducing and promoting a counterfeit doctrine of worship that he and others like him have invented.

It is worth noting that this particular pastor is a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary in California. This is the seminary that gave birth to the Purpose-Driven Church movement, and it is a hotbed of anti-Biblical theology and practice.

Dear friends, let me repeat: False doctrines concerning worship will not stand alone. False doctrine spreads like cancer. When we see counterfeit worship in a church it is a key indicator of the fact that that church and its pastor and its leadership have deeper and wider doctrinal problems that can cut the very heart out of the Christian faith.

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That is sadly the case with this pastor in Colorado, and it is the case with thousands of other pastors and churches in our time. They do not regard God as the One who is truly holy. The One who has all authority. They have usurped God’s authority. They seek to establish man-made authority, man-made religion, man-made worship. But God will not have it. He will not accept it.

“I Will Be Regarded As Holy”

Dear friends, with this in mind I want to take you back to the passage in the book of Leviticus that I mentioned a few moments ago – the very important passage, that this pastor, writing in this magazine on worship, chose to ignore.

At the very inception of the tabernacle worship, at the very inception of the brazen altar, where sacrifice was to be made for sin, God says this to Moses, Leviticus chapter six, verse thirteen: “A fire shall always be burning on the altar. It shall never go out.” Note this carefully: “A fire shall always be burning on the altar. It shall never go out.”

Now, what was the source of this fire that must never go out? Where did the fire come from? This is a very important question, with a vital answer. We find the answer to that question in Leviticus chapter nine, and verse twenty-two. Turn there with me if you are able – Leviticus chapter nine, and verse twenty-two.

The scene that we find here is the dedication of the tabernacle. Moses had set it up in the wilderness in the center of the great tent city of the Israelites. Moses had

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dedicated and consecrated Aaron and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, as priests of God. And the time had now come to offer the first sacrifices on the Brazen Altar. And this is what we read, beginning in verse 22:

Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people.

Then [notice] the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. (Leviticus 9:22-24)

What was the source of the fire on the altar? The question more specifically is, *who* was the source of the fire on the altar? And the answer is: God Himself. God sent the fire. And He commanded the priests to keep it burning once it was there. Keep My fire burning, God says. Let there not be a fire on the altar from any other source.

And when you light the Lamp in the Holy of Holies, and when you burn the incense on the Altar of Incense, carry fire from the Brazen Altar to do it. Let not any other fire be used. The fire that consumes the sacrifice, the fire that lights the lamp, the fire that burns the incense, must be Heavenly fire, not earthly fire.

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Dear friends, in our day we must not bring any other fire into the worship and service of our God. Just as there was no light in the Holy Place except the light of the Lamp of God, there was no fire in the Holy Place except the Fire of God. Sanctified worship, kindled by God. Sanctified fellowship, kindled by God. Sanctified service, kindled by God.

Dear friends, we need to have the fires of our worship kindled by God. What did the two disciples on the road to Emmaus say after our risen Lord came and set forth His person and work for them from the Scriptures? They said, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

God Himself kindled that fire in their hearts. How we need to seek to have that fire of the one true and holy God burning within our hearts, and energizing all of our worship of Him. Keeping the lamp of the light of our witness burning. Keeping the incense of our prayers ascending. We must not seek to be energized and motivated by the things of this world, but by the things of God in Christ and in His Word, by the power of the Spirit.

That is why God was so deadly serious about the source of the fire on the altars of the tabernacle. Immediately after this account in Leviticus chapter 9, we have recorded for us the great sin of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu. Please turn with me to Leviticus chapter ten and verse one. Leviticus chapter ten and verse one:

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Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire [literally, foreign fire] before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me, I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.’ ”

This is a tragic scene, but it is a most instructive scene. To offer incense mingled with fire that was not God’s fire was a most deep and serious offense to the holiness of God. The two altars of God – the brazen altar and the altar of incense – were linked together by the express command of God. On the cross, symbolized by the Brazen Altar, Christ paid the blood-price for our sins. He bore the fires of the wrath of our God who is a consuming fire.

And at the Altar of Incense in Heaven, the heavenly altar that the tabernacle altar symbolized, the same Christ ever lives to intercede for us. At Calvary, Jesus brought us up out of the mirey clay. He set our feet on solid ground. At the throne of God He keeps us from falling. He maintains our fellowship and communion with God.

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Biblical Worship: All About the Cross

Dear friends, we find something very interesting as we understand the arrangement of the furnishings of the tabernacle. If you could look down on the tabernacle from above, without its tent coverings, you would have seen that the Brazen Altar, the Laver, the Altar of Incense, and the Mercy Seat were all in a straight line from the entrance.

And you would also have seen that the Lampstand and the Table of Shewbread were in another straight line relationship to one another, one at the left, the other at the right. And that line is perpendicular to the straight line that runs from the Brazen Altar all the way to the Mercy Set.

And it is no accident that these two straight lines form a Cross. The tabernacle of the Old Testament is a picture of the Cross. It is a picture of the cross-work of Jesus Christ. The Cross was the plan of God, from before the foundation of the world.

Dear friends, our worship of God is all about the cross. The cross was necessary because of the holiness of God. The cross was necessary because of our sin. The cross was where the holy wrath of God for sin was satisfied, once and for all.

To attempt to worship God, apart from faith in the Christ of the cross, is, as it were, to bring strange fire to the Altar of Incense. It is, as it were, to bypass the brazen altar, the place of sacrifice for sin. You cannot come into the throne-room

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of God, except by way of the Cross. God has promised to receive only the worship of those who come to Him in the all-sufficient name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In John chapter four, verse twenty-three, Jesus said that

the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such [a people] to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:23-24)

The fact is, the so-called worship of most of present-day Evangelicalism is an offense to God. The prayer that God must first hear is this: “God be merciful to me a sinner.” And large segments of the nominally Evangelical church – including many of its pastors and leaders – have never truly prayed that prayer. They have never been regenerated by God the Holy Spirit.

How can I say that? Because if they were truly regenerated, they would be preaching the truth. They would be leading their people to worship God in truth. But instead, they are preaching and promoting Satan’s lies.

Make no mistake. “There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). But, “He [Jesus] is able to save them to the uttermost who come to God through Him” [through Him! – Why?] because He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

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Because He has, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us in chapter nine, “now, once at the end of the ages, appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” He has been exalted “now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:12). Let true worshippers worship our great God and Savior in the beauty of holiness, and in spirit and in truth. Amen.

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The Scripture-Driven Church airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is that of the Great Commission: to preach the Gospel to the world, and to equip believers to stand upon and live by the sole authority of God’s Word, to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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