

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**  
**Chapter 19- Luke 19:45-48**

300- Jesus Cleanses the House of Prayer and  
Institutes True Worship

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December 27, 2015

## **Luke 19:45-48**

**45** Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling,

**46** saying to them, "**It is written, 'AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN.**"

**47** And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him,

**48** and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.

To the Glory of God

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was born on December 11, 1918, and grew up to be a Russian novelist, historian, and outspoken critic of the Soviet Union- especially its totalitarianism. During his life- Solzhenitsyn helped to raise global awareness of the unthinkable brutality and atrocities of the Gulag system in the Soviet Union- which was their forced labor camp system. And he did that by writing two very famous books:

- ✓ One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (1962)
- ✓ The Gulag Archipelago (1973)

... which told the story of how unbelievably horrific Communism really was- and the violent brutality that sprang out from the fact that Communism is much more than merely an "alternative economic

system"- as is so often taught today- but was, in fact, utterly godless, and, thus, cared little or nothing for human life. So, if you are wondering what a purely secular Government would look like- study Soviet Communism.

After being released from the Soviet Union, Solzhenitsyn made a famous commencement address for the graduating class at Harvard University in 1978. And in that speech- Solzhenitsyn said:

“Western materialism is as bad and perhaps even worse than the philosophical materialism of communist countries. Because Communism claims that matter is all that *is*. But Western materialism believes that matter is all that *matters*.”

Solzhenitsyn went on to say,

“No Christian would agree (that is, if the matter were put to him or her as an abstract proposition) that matter is all that matters, for our very faith negates the assertion. Yet if our behavior (as distinct from our verbal profession) is examined, many of us who call ourselves Christians begin to look more like materialists. So while we talk of heaven- we continually strive for things.”

We see this today in much of what the modern Church says and does. Today in far too many cases- the only “unforgivable sin” is for a congregation to attempt to leave a denomination with its property. The minister can preach outright heresy and be praised. But if the Church tries to leave the denomination- the “powers that be” come down on it with all the legal force at its disposal. A minister friend of mine that I correspond with from Australia told me that, the denominations in his country are:

“nothing but real estate holding companies.”

The evil triplets of Covetousness, Materialism, and Worldliness have *always* been a serious problem with genuine Christians. Always have been and always will be. Our flesh loves to feel good about itself. But the Church has historically taught that lusting after prosperity and equating spiritual maturity with your bank account or material

holdings was sinful and was *always* dishonoring to God and was ultimately destructive to us.

The difference between then and now is that with the enormous popularity of the Health, Wealth and Prosperity perversion- the natural and normal lust that fallen human beings have to be made much of- and to seek joy and satisfaction in things that are passing away rather than the Lord Christ- has not only allowed old fashion covetousness and pagan materialism to make a huge comeback in our day- it has *sanctified* it- and made it to not only *no longer* be sinful- but to actually be godly and something to aspire to.

And so if you are wanting to compete with other religious groups for more bodies on the pews- then you have to learn how to “play the game” or be left behind. *“People want to have their needs met- not told that they are sinful and need to repent,”* is the mantra that dominates the headlines of the modern American Church. And the result is that the edge of the Sword of the Word of God has been dulled, and today most people honestly believe that a side benefit to being saved is that God will give them more of this world’s goods, that Jesus died to help them fulfill their own ambitions, and that Grace is a tool that we have access to that enables us to live better lives down here on earth.

And my contention is that the three manifestations of human depravity of Covetousness, Worldliness, and Materialism are not discussed to any depth today- *not* because we have all risen to such a level of spiritual maturity that we have escaped their deception and lies, and so we no longer need to be warned against them- but precisely because we are so neck deep involved in all three- that we cannot see afar off.

But we not only live in a grossly materialistic age- we also live in an age of sophisticated advertising- and the two go hand in hand. We understand how that works with secular companies, though we groan at the sheer volume of catalogs and mail solicitations that come to us on a daily basis. But what about “Christian junk mail,” which is what much of the evangelical literature really is?

Now this is not an easy subject to address, because the majority of people who attend the average Church today will simply not give to Christian Ministry unless they are asked repeatedly to do so. And I have never understood that phenomenon. Because if you are truly saved- then part of that Salvation is that you are *eagerly* and

*continually* asking the Lord, “*What would You have me to do?*” Or “*Here am I, Lord- use me*”.

We talk about Hudson Taylor and George Mueller and admire the way God sustained their efforts for Jesus by prayer alone and not asking for money directly. But we really don't believe we can do that in our day. We trust in mass advertising more than we trust in God. We corrode the term “prayer support” to really mean “financial support”. And while we say we are trusting God to work through the *means* we are using to “acquaint the Christian public,” we would feel rather frightened if those *means* were taken away. Poor old God would be left to stumble along without His crutches.

Now the problem is not asking for money. Christian Ministries need money and Christian workers do not need to be ashamed to request financial help. The problem lies in *misrepresenting* the Work that is being done, employing words such as “faith in God alone” to mask requests for money and using secular techniques to manipulate people into giving.

So why don't we ask for money- *honestly*? Mike Horton does. On *The White Horse Inn*, his weekly radio program, you will hear Mike say,

“Grace is free but radio time is not. And so we need your gifts to stay on this station.”

Now not many laypeople have an opportunity to attend the annual Christian Booksellers Convention, a trade show so large that only about five cities in the United States have a convention facility large enough to host it. But if you do have an opportunity to go, my advice to you is, “*Don't go!*”

The Christian Booksellers Convention is one of the most tawdry, offensive, and disillusioning gatherings of evangelical Christians that you can possibly imagine. The publishers are there, many marketing perfectly good books. But so are the hucksters, promoting the worst “Jesus junk” imaginable: T-shirts and bumper stickers (“Honk if you love Jesus”) and pencils and plaques and bookmarks, all with some cheap religious saying. The only way to survive the annual booksellers convention is to laugh. Because if you take it seriously- you would cry.

One recent example of the sinful exploitation of Jesus for profit is the “book to bumper sticker to bracelet to t-shirt to ball cap” fad. Which is when somebody writes a book about a religious subject- usually a pretty vague and shallow subject- and as soon as the sales take off- you have “God Chaser” bumper stickers and “WWJD” bracelets, and then “Promise Keeper” t-shirts come out, and finally you get the “Honk if you love Jesus” ball caps.

The American preoccupation with religious trinkets would make the Catholic organization of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century blush with embarrassment. Back then, they promoted breast milk from the virgin Mary, pieces of wood from the Cross, the underwear of John the Baptist, and 16 full body skeletons of the 12 Apostles.

But the Protestant Reformation was supposed to fix all that. That Move of the Holy Spirit was a glorious *re-discovery* of the Grace of God and a return to Biblical Authority in the Church. And yet, today, John Hagee will sell you pages from an original King James Bible, while TD Jakes will sell you prayer cloths, others will sell you crosses made from Olive trees taken out of the Garden of Gethsemane and water from the River Jordan, while Robert Tilton will sell you a triple anointing of the Holy Spirit for a donation of \$99.99. So I am sad to report to you that after 500 years of protesting the great abuses and wanderings of Rome- we still have a lot of work to do.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with asking, “*What would Jesus do?*” in *any* situation. But as we ask that- we need to also ask, “*Who makes these items? And is the goal really to help people live like Jesus or simply to make a quick profit?*” Do we really believe that things like this honors Jesus Christ? Or are they merely taking God’s Name in vain?

Local Christian bookstores would not suffer terribly if we boycotted stupid items like “Honk if you love Jesus” bumper stickers, Jesus sweat shirts, Jesus pencils, bookmarks, praying hands, charismatic jewelry and other sacrilegious garbage. Why don’t discerning believers boycott such blaspheme? Why don’t we begin to conduct adult Sunday-school class discussions on “*Modern Moneychangers*” and “*How to Overturn Tables for the Glory of God?*”

I will tell you that just like God’s Judgment fell upon a carnal and worldly Jewish State- that *same* Judgement is falling on the West. You and I are witnessing the systematic *dismantling* of Western Civilization

right before our eyes, and as Islamic mosques are ringing out loudly in our major cities- the American Church is hip deep in "Vegetails" and Christian Comedians and Christian Fiction and their slumber is deep.

As for the American Church- *the* single best thing that could possibly happen to it- *the* single greatest gift of God's Grace that could be given at this moment- is that Jesus would come again and in His Righteous Fury- He would walk into the Church- that He said was a House of Prayer- and He would assert His Divine Authority as Lord of the House, He would kick over the tables where God's Word is being merchandised, He would beat the false teachers and those who love them, He would dismantle the crass commercialization of the purity of His Ministry, and Jesus would cleanse Father's House again as He intimated He would do one day when He cleansed the Jerusalem Temple. And that is why Luke tells us in verses 47-48:

**47 And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him,**  
**48 and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.**

... so these religious hypocrites were not merely disagreeing with Jesus- Dr. Luke says:

**... the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him**

But we need to understand that some of what they thought Jesus was doing was correct. Because I will also tell you that in addition to crying out against hypocritical worship and the commercialization of the holy things of God, Jesus was doing something even more important and even more profound. He was, in fact, *ending* the Old Testament Jewish concept of worship and replacing it with an infinitely superior model.

And to get a proper understanding of what was really going on here in this Passage- we have to know that the Temple was a huge religious complex. Now the Temple *itself* was actually relatively small- consisting merely of the Holy Place, where the priests ministered, and the Most Holy Place, which only the high priest could enter once a year.

But this comparatively small building was surrounded by several concentric "courts"- the outermost of which was a very large "court" called "The Court of the Gentiles". And this is where the money changing and the selling of sacrificial animals took place- because, being the place for the dirty, pagan, Gentiles- it was not thought of as being particularly sacred.

And two kinds of business were transacted in "The Court of the Gentiles". The first was the exchange of various national currencies from other nations of the world for the "Temple Coins" that were the only currency allowed to pay the "Temple Tax". Now the "Temple Tax" could be paid in the various Provinces *before* the Passover- which is why, several months earlier, the tax authorities had asked Peter whether his Master had paid His Temple Tax. But as the time of the Passover drew closer- the half shekel tax could only be paid at the Temple.

The other kind of "selling" carried out at the Temple was the sale of animals used for sacrifice. Now it is true that genuine worshipers did not *have* to buy the animals at the Temple- they were free to bring their sacrifices with them. But this was very inconvenient for pilgrims coming from long distances. So animals were provided to the worshippers for a convenience.

But the main reason was that the Law stipulated that the animals who were sacrificed had to be without any physical blemish. And whether they were or not- had to be determined by the priest. And since there was always a chance that the priest would *reject* an animal- even after it had been brought a long way- most people just bought one at the Temple sight- which coincidentally always had an abundance of blemish-free animals.

So the justification for these moneychangers was not completely wrong. They stressed the Holiness of God and the great need to offer Him the best possible sacrifices. But both of these justifications were open to great and repeated abuse- which was rampant in that day.

Now the money changers usually charged 6% for exchanging money from whatever currency the worshipper had- to the one single coin that was used at the Temple. And if the coin of the worshipper was of *greater* value than the required half shekel Temple coin- these people charged an *additional* 6% for simply giving change. And this would

make the total charge imposed on the worshipper to be about half a day's wage for the average laboring man.

So just imagine on the one hand- being *forced* to attend Church by the ruling authorities and by your own family along with the greater culture and feeling the pressure to worship God by your own personal instincts. And then- on top of that compulsion- imagine not being able to even get into the Church without first paying out about half a day's wage to these money changers. So for example, if a man in our day is making \$600/week and worked six days to make it- he would have to pay about \$50 to just get inside the Church.

Now keep in mind this was *not* your tithe. And this wasn't your offering either. This was in *addition* to any actual "giving" you did. This was just what you had to pay to get inside the Church to even begin to worship God.

But as bad as that was- abuses associated with the sale of the sacrificial animals were even worse. Now like I said- a worshipper was free to bring his own sacrifice. But the reality is that the "fix was in" and your animal was almost guaranteed *not* to pass inspection from the priest. So the reality is that in addition to having to "pay at the door" just to get in- almost every single worshipper was *forced* to buy an animal from the ones for sale at the "Court of the Gentiles"- and those animals were not cheap. For example, a pair of doves could cost *fifty times* more *inside* the Temple area than outside!

Now add to this the fact that at the time of the Passover- which this was- Jerusalem was literally thronged with hundreds of thousands, if not millions of pilgrims. The City of David would normally have several thousand residents who lived there. But at the Passover season just after the Crucifixion- Josephus, the Jewish historian, reported that 256,500 lambs were taken into the city. Now you have to understand that one lamb was eaten by one household- and the households back then had many children, grandparents, aunts and uncles- all using a single lamb. The average was ten people to one lamb. So Jerusalem had as many as 2.6 million people trying to get into the Temple the year after Jesus was crucified.

So this time when Dr. Luke wrote about this event- as Jesus presented Himself as Israel's King and Messiah- the Temple- which was supposed to be the House of Prayer- had become nothing more than a bazaar. Now look again at verses 45-46:



**45** Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling,  
**46** saying to them, "**It is written, 'AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN.**"

Now notice that when Jesus drove the money changers and those who were selling animals for sacrifice from the Court of the Gentiles in this Passage- He *justified* His Action by a comparison of two different Old Testament phrases- **Isaiah 56:7** and **Jeremiah 7:11**.

#### **Isaiah 56:7**

**Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.**

#### **Jeremiah 7:11**

**Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen *it*," declares the Lord.**

Notice that in the first- the Prophet Isaiah referred to the Temple as being a **"House of Prayer"**. But in the second, the Prophet Jeremiah says that the hypocritical worshipers of his day had caused the Temple to become nothing but **"a den of robbers"**.

So, Jeremiah was crying out against "religious hypocrisy", or even better put- "hypocritical worship". And Jesus used the word "*robbers*" *here* to describe the unjust extortion that was going on right there at the Temple. So hypocrisy was foremost in His Mind because of the gross commercializing of worship. And as we have already seen- this is still a great problem today.

But Isaiah's prophecy was not about religious hypocrisy or selling religious trinkets. Isaiah was predicting under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit a completely different model of worship than the people understood from the Law.

Now keep in mind that the entire setting here from **Luke 19:28** and on is Jesus' Own declaration of His Kingship by His entry into Jerusalem. And it was unlike any other coronation in history. And this awkward, clumsy, even ridiculous scene in which this grown Man- with His Feet dragging the ground on both sides of this ewe of a donkey- is

nonetheless making a Divine Announcement that the King of the Universe has come. And the establishment of this King's Kingdom will *not* be by Him sitting on a throne- dressed in royal robes- ruling the world- but by Him hanging on a tree- naked- screaming in agony- as He dies for the sins of the world.

And this Entry which the people thought would be the triumphant parade of the victorious Messiah set forth a "Season of Salvation" in world history during which naturally born enemies of God can put their faith and confidence into the Unconditional Surrender that God is offering through Jesus Christ.

And today I want to announce to you that there is still time to avoid the cataclysmic Judgment that is coming by embracing the Amnesty that King Jesus holds out to you, by renouncing your allegiance to self and success and money and family and physical pleasure and security – and whatever else rules you more than Jesus. And you can bow and receive Christ as your King and swear allegiance to Him, and be on His side with everlasting joy when the Hammer of God falls.

Now what we have to understand is that the Kingship of Jesus will look much Different when He comes back than it does now. Right now- Christ's Kingdom is manifested through a brief "Season of Salvation" that is being offered in world history. And it is brief- even though it has lasted now over 2,000 years- because it is brief in terms of comparing this season with how long we will exist in either Heaven or Hell.

So I pray you can comprehend the Wonder of this brief Season of Salvation in world history and consider that the day is coming, and perhaps it will be very soon- when the Kingship of Jesus will look very different than it does now. Here is a description of that Kingship, as it will look when Jesus comes back from **The Revelation 19:11-19:**

**11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.**

**12 His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself.**

**13 *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.**

**14** And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses.

**15** From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

**16** And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

The Apostle John then wrote:

**The Revelation 22:11**

**Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.**

So when the Kingship of Jesus appears in the skies like that- it will be too late to switch sides. And that is why the Apostle Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 6:2b**:

**... Behold, now is "*THE ACCEPTABLE TIME*," behold, now is "*THE DAY OF SALVATION*" —**

And I believe that is what Dr. Luke is trying to say to us this morning in the way Jesus proclaims His Kingship here in **Luke 19**. What Jesus wants us to hear- what He wants us to see- is that, yes, He is King, and yes, His Kingship is not *provincial* or *tribal* or ethnic or national. His Kingdom is *international* and *global* and *universal*. But Christ's Kingship now is manifested in a meek and lowly and welcoming and seeking and forgiving and patient way. Jesus will, in a matter of just a few days from this moment here in **Luke 19** shed His Own Blood to save all who will repent and trust in His Amnesty and who will renounce wickedness and obey Him.

And until He comes back- this is the Wonder of His Kingship. This is the kind of gentle and merciful and loving King Jesus is. Jesus saves sinners. But if you spurn His Love and trust in yourself and in your own goodness and in your own efforts- Jesus will be the kind of King Who will crush you when He comes back.

Now in order to fully understand just what Jesus is doing here in this Passage- we need to go to another Passage that will help. So please turn with me to **The Revelation 22:6-9**

**6 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.**

**7 "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."**

**8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.**

**9 But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."**

Now I want us all to hear this very simple but very profound Command, **"Worship God!"** One of the last things that the Holy Bible tells us to do is to "Worship God!" The Apostle John was overwhelmed at all that God had shown him in this vision and he was so overcome with emotion that he fell down to worship at the feet of what he supposed was an angel. But this being spoke to him and said,

**... Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book.**

So the being that had taken John all over Heaven was not really an angel after all- but was a human being who had been saved and who had already been glorified. In fact, the being called himself:

**... a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book.**

So this being was a sinner who had been saved by Grace. And then he told John one of the most important things that could ever be said,

**Worship God!**

In other words, don't worship angels- worship God! Don't worship anything else- worship God! And this is so simple but so very profound. Don't neglect God or despise God, or trifle with God or debate with God or argue with God or rebel against God. Just worship God! And this is the last Chapter of the Bible. And this is the best and highest duty of Man- to know God, love God, enjoy God forever. In other words- worship God!

And so everything we do and sing about and say and teach and preach and pray about involves the worship of God. So worship is the main thing. So I say to you that Man exists to worship God. And therefore- the Church exists to worship God. And so Preaching and teaching exist to proclaim the Goodness and Majesty of God until He becomes absolutely irresistible. So everything is about worship.

But only saved people can worship God. Now lost people can *glorify* God- either by being used unwittingly to further God's Will on earth or by burning in hell to magnify the Glory of God's Justice against unrepentant sinners. But while lost people can *glorify* God- they cannot *worship* God. Only saved people can worship God. And that means that Evangelism exists only because Worship does *not* exist.

Lost people do not know God nor love God, and they certainly do not enjoy God. Sin has made them blind to God's Beauty. Sin has made them stupid about God's Majesty, and Sin has deceived them into thinking that rebelling against God is the pathway to joy and satisfaction. Here is how the Apostle Paul described it:

## **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**

**3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,  
4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

But God is determined to be known and to be loved and treasured and adored and valued and exalted and enjoyed more and better than anything else is known and loved and enjoyed. And so – at great cost to Himself- God took on flesh and became Man and fulfilled the righteous Requirement of the Law, and took upon Himself the sins of those He chose to reveal Himself to, and absorbed the Fury of the Wrath of God

against those sins and rose again on the third day in absolute Triumph so that all who repent and put their trust in Him will be given that Amnesty and will no longer be an enemy of God.

And God will open their eyes and God will unstop their ears and God will give them a heart of flesh, and these unworthy sinners will repent and they will trust in Jesus and they will know God and love Him and they will enjoy Him forever! They will worship God!

So sin stops worship from happening. In fact, that is what sin is. It is knowing and loving and enjoying something else besides God. And that is what makes sin to be so evil and so sinful and so wrong. It is the dishonoring of what God values the most- His Own Glory. It is the belittling of what is the best thing in the Universe- God's Glory. It is the dishonoring of what is the most honorable thing in all the world- God.

So everything we do and say and believe and think should lead us into worship. And yet what we find in the New Testament, perhaps to our amazement, is an utterly stunning degree of *indifference* to worship as an outward ritual, and an utterly radical *intensification* of worship as an inward experience of the heart.

So please hear me when I give you a startling fact- that throughout the Epistles of the New Testament- there is very little instruction that deals explicitly with what we call "corporate worship" or what we call "worship services".

Now I'm not saying that there were no corporate gatherings for worship because there were. **1 Corinthians 14:23** speaks of:

**"the whole Church assembles together,"**

**The Acts 2:46** speaks of:

**Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,**

And **Hebrews 10:25** speaks of:

**not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.**

But the remarkable thing is that, even when the gatherings are in view- the Apostles do not speak explicitly of "worship." Let me illustrate this so that you feel its full force. In the Old Testament the most common word for "worship" is the Hebrew word "hishtahvah" (or some related form of that word). And its basic meaning is: *to bow down, with the sense of reverence and respect and honor.*

And this word occurs 171 times in the Old Testament. And when the Old Testament was written in Greek- 164 of those instances were translated to the Greek word "proskuneo".

And in the New Testament- this is the main word for worship - proskuneo. But when you look at its use- something astonishing appears. The word is common in the four Gospels (26 times) – because people would often bow down worshipfully before Jesus. And it is common in **The Book of the Revelation** (21 times) because the angels and elders in heaven often bow down before God.

But in the Epistles of Paul- this word occurs only one time- namely in **1 Corinthians 14:25** where the unbeliever falls down at the power of prophecy and confesses God is in the assembly. But this word doesn't occur at all in the letters of Peter, James or John.

And that is remarkable - that the main word for worship in the Old Testament is virtually *absent* from the Epistles of the New Testament. So why is this? Why are the very Epistles that are written to help the Church be what it ought to be in this age- almost totally devoid of this word and of explicit teaching on the specifics of "corporate worship"?

The reason is found in the way Jesus treated worship in His Own Life and Teaching. His main Statement about worship is found in **John 4:20-24**- so go there. And as you go there- keep in mind that Jesus' Attitude toward the Temple- which at that time was the main place of Jewish worship- was not at all what the Jewish leaders thought it should be.

And so when Jesus made a whip and drove out the money changers from the Temple- the reason He gave was *not* for the sake of offering a proper sacrifice to God- but for the sake of prayer. And not merely *Jewish* prayer- but prayer for all the nations. In **Luke 19:46** Jesus quoted Isaiah who said:

**Isaiah 56:7b**

**... My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.**

In other words, Jesus focused attention *away* from the outward acts of Jewish sacrifices in the Temple to the personal act of genuine communion with God in prayer for all peoples and not just the Jew. And then Jesus said two other things about the Temple that pointed to a radically altered view of worship and that greatly offended the Jewish leaders. He said:

**Matthew 12:6**

**But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here.**

and then He said:

**John 2:19**

**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**

And this attitude toward the Temple not only got Jesus killed (Mark 14:58; 15:29), but it also got Stephen killed when he said in **The Acts 7:48-53**:

**48** However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says:

**49** *'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET; WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?'* says the Lord, *'OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE?'*

**50** *'WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?'*

**51** "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

**52** "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;

**53** you who received the law as ordained by angels, and *yet* did not keep it.

So what both Jesus and Stephen were doing was identifying Jesus Himself as being the true Temple- where true worship will take place.



And so in Himself- Jesus will fulfill everything the Temple stood for- *especially* the place where believers meet God.

So Jesus is pointing attention *away* from worship as a *localized* thing with outward ritual and pointing it toward a personal, spiritual experience with Himself at the center. And because that is true- worship does not need a building, a priesthood or a sacrificial system any longer. It only needs a dead and risen Christ.

So by casting out the money changers- Jesus was not only exposing hypocritical worship that made merchandise of the holy things of God- but He was also showing that the entire *system* of worship that the Jew knew under the Old Covenant was about to come to an end and be completely replaced with an infinitely *superior* way of worship!

And what Jesus was doing to worship here at the Temple with these money changers in the way He related to the Temple is made explicit in **John 4:20-24**. And here Jesus uses the Greek word *proskuneo* - that dominant Old Testament word for worship - and shows that it was laden with outward and localized meanings. And then Jesus transforms it into a concept that is mainly *inward* rather than outward, and mainly *pervasive* rather than localized. Read that Passage with me:

#### **John 4:20-21**

**20 "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."**

**21 Jesus said to her, "*Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.*"**

Here you can see Jesus freeing worship from its outward and localized connotations. So the place of worship is no longer the issue. He said, "**neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.**" And then He goes on,

**22 "*You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.*"**

**23 "*But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.*"**

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

And here is the key phrase,

**"the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth"**

So the true worship- which was anticipated for the Age to come- has now arrived in Jesus:

**"an hour is coming [in the age to come] and now is [here in Me]."**

And what marks this true future worship that has broken into the present time from the glorious age to come is that it is not bound by localized place or outward form. So, instead of being in this mountain or in Jerusalem- true worship is now "in spirit and in truth."

So what Jesus is doing here is stripping proskuneo of its last vestiges of localized and outward connotation. Not that it will be wrong for worship to be in a place or that it will be wrong for it to use outward forms, but rather He is making explicit and central that this is *not* what makes worship to be true worship. What makes worship to be *true* worship is what happens "in spirit and in truth" - with or without a place, and with or without outward forms.

And the phrase "in spirit" means that this true worship is carried along by God the Holy Spirit, and is happening mainly as an inward, spiritual event and not mainly as an outward bodily event. And the phrase "in truth" means that this true worship is a *response* to believing true things about God, and is shaped and guided by true beliefs about God.

So what Jesus has done is break decisively the necessary connection between worship and its outward and localized associations. From now on- worship is mainly something inward and free from locality. And this is what He meant when He said:

**Matthew 15:8&9**

**8 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.**

## 9 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'

You see, when the heart is far from God- worship is vain, empty, and non-existent- wherever you are. So the reality of the experience of the heart is the defining, vital, indispensable essence of true worship.

Now let's go back to our earlier question: Why is the central Old Testament word for worship, *proskuneo*, virtually boycotted by Peter, James, John and Paul in the letters they write to the New Testament believers?

It is because this word did not make clear enough the inward, spiritual nature of true worship. It carried significant connotations of place and form. The word was associated with physically bowing down and with the actual presence of a visible manifestation to bow down before.

And in the Gospels- Jesus was really there in visible form to fall down before. So the word *proskuneo* was used a lot. And in **The Book of the Revelation** the bowing down usually happens to God's manifestation in Heaven or to false gods on the earth. So the word *proskuneo* is used widely in **The Revelation** as well.

But in the Epistles- which *replaced* the first five Books of Moses as the "teaching Books" of the New Covenant- something very different is happening. Jesus is *not* present in visible glory to fall before. Therefore the whole tendency of the early Church - at least as it moved out of Jerusalem - was to deal with worship as primarily inward and spiritual rather than outward and ritualistic, and primarily pervasive rather than localized.

And to confirm this, and see even more clearly how radically non-place- and non-event-oriented the New Testament view of worship is, consider what Paul does to some of the other words related to Old Testament worship. For example, the next most frequent word for worship in the Greek Old Testament (after *proskuneo*) is the word *latreuo* (over 90 times, almost always translating from the Hebrew *`abad*) which is usually translated as "serve," as in **Exodus 23:24**:

**You shall not worship their gods nor serve them...**

But when Paul uses it for Christian worship- he goes out of his way to make sure that we know he means *not* a localized or outward form for worship practice, but a non-localized, spiritual experience. In fact, he takes it so far as to treat virtually all of life as an act of worship when lived in the right spirit.

For example, in **Romans 1:9&10** he says:

**9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the *preaching of the* gospel of His Son, is my witness *as to* how unceasingly I make mention of you,  
10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.**

And in **Philippians 3:3** Paul says that true Christians:

**"worship God in the Spirit of God . . . and put no confidence in the flesh."**

And in **Romans 12:1b** Paul urges Christians to:

**... present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.**

So even when Paul uses an Old Testament word for worship, he takes pains to let us know that what he has in mind is *not* mainly a localized or external event of worship, but an internal, spiritual experience - so much so that he sees all of life and ministry as an expression of that inner experience of worship.

And you see the same thing if you take the New Testament use of the Old Testament language for Temple "sacrifices" and "priestly service." The praise and thanks of the lips is called a "**sacrifice to God**" (**Hebrews 13:15**). But so are good works in everyday life (**Hebrews 13:16**). Paul calls his own ministry a "**priestly service [of worship]**", and he calls the converts themselves an "**acceptable offering [in worship]**" to God (**Romans 15:16**; see also **Philippians 2:17**). He even calls the money that the churches send him "**a fragrant aroma and acceptable sacrifice to God [in worship]**" (**Philippians 4:18**). And his own death for Christ he calls a "**drink offering to God**" (**2Timothy 4:6**).

So you can see what is happening in the New Testament. By Jesus overturning the moneychangers in the Temple- He was not only saying

that hypocritical worship and making merchandise of the things of God is an abomination- but that the very purpose of the Temple itself was soon to be destroyed and a radically new paradigm of worship would be instituted on the earth.

And so Worship is being significantly *de-institutionalized, de-localized, de-ritualized*. The whole thrust is being taken off of ceremony and seasons and places and forms, and is being shifted to what is happening in the heart - not just on Sunday, but every day, and all the time in all of life.

And this is what it means when we read things like,

**1Corinthians 10:31**

**Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

And

**Colossians 3:17**

**Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.**

*This* is the form of worship commanded in the New Testament: to act in a way that reflects the Value of the Glory of God- *wherever* you are. So worship then is defined as:

To do a thing in the Name of Jesus in the Power of the Holy Spirit-  
all to the Glory of God.

And that is the basic form of "living worship". But the New Testament uses those greatest of all worship sentences without any reference to a worship "service". They describe all of life.

So even when Paul calls us to "be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father," there is no reference to a time or place or a service. In fact, the key word is "always" - "always giving thanks for all things in the name of Jesus" (see **Colossians 3:16**).

Now this may, in fact, be what we should do in a worship service, but it is not Paul's burden to tell us that. His burden is to call for a radical, inward authenticity of worship, and an all-encompassing pervasiveness of worship in all of life. Place and form are not of the essence. Spirit and truth are all-important.

And this is what gripped and shaped the Reformed tradition- especially the Puritans. The Puritans carried through the simplification and freedom of worship in music and liturgy and architecture. Patrick Collinson, the great historian of Elizabethan Puritanism summarized Puritan theory and practice by saying that,

“The life of the Puritan was in one sense a continuous act of worship, pursued under an unremitting and lively sense of God's Providential Purposes and constantly refreshed by religious activity, personal, domestic and public.”

In fact, one of the reasons Puritans kept their churches very simple was to separate attention *away* from the physical place to the inward, spiritual nature of true worship.

So my conclusion then is that in the New Testament there is a stunning *indifference* to the outward forms and places of worship. And there is, at the same time, a radical *intensification* of worship as an inward, spiritual experience that has no bounds and pervades all of life. And these emphases were first introduced to us right here as Jesus throws down the moneychangers, and they were *recaptured* in the Reformation and came to clear expression in the Puritan wing of the Reformed tradition.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn saw that the human spirit longs for things higher and purer than anything a materialistic culture can provide. And this persecuted Russian warned us that if we sell out to a lust for new shiny religious trinkets rather than true worship of a real God- what we will get- is a new Dark Age that will consume us. May God help us all.

Amen. Let's pray.

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