

What Is Divine Worship

Let us turn to our Bibles to, we'll go to Exodus 20 verses 4 and following first and then we will read from Hosea 3. Exodus chapter 20 verses 4 and following 4 to 6, which is part of the Ten Commandments, God's moral law revealed. Let us listen attentively to the Word of God. You shall not make for yourself a carved image in the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them nor serve them for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me but showing mercy to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. I preached on this in a twofold manner last week, the second commandment in which negatively we are not to worship God by any imagination of our heart to do whatever we feel like feels good to us and honoring him and positively that we are supposed to take his ordinances that he's given us, like listening to the Word of God, reading and prayer before him to do so seriously and with love and obedience to him. Let us go to Hosea chapter 3 which is where I'm preaching from because the prophets assume and apply God's holy will, the Ten Commandments, to the situation of the Old Testament Church and the Jews there and here in Hosea he mentions a number of times especially in the opening chapter of that great metaphor, description and picture of the people of God being married to God himself in covenant and how they've broken that covenant and how do they break the covenant? By chasing foreign gods and we saw in particular I hope last week that they chased not just foreign gods but they mix the foreign gods worship with the worship of the covenant-keeping God.

There are similar names we have that today as false religions use the word God even and Lord and we're like well we know the difference but you can imagine if you start mixing them up all the confusion that would arise from it and how wrong that would be and dishonoring before God Almighty and that's what we have here and described as spiritual idolatry, spiritual adultery, not idolatry although you can use that as well with an I but with a A for one who has broken the covenant vows. Let us listen attentively to the Word of God, Hosea 3.3. And I said to her, that is the woman he has brought from unfaithfulness into the marriage again, you shall stay with me many days you shall not play the harlot nor shall you have a man so too I will be toward you. Let us pray.

Gracious God above as you've given this graphic and shocking description Lord of what it means to have false worship before you not only a violation especially of the first commandment to have no other gods before you but also the second commandment which teaches and tells us Lord what that worship and honor of you looks like both in the heart but especially Lord in the second commandment outwardly in our actions. Father, Son and Holy Spirit may we take seriously anew if you've forgotten the severity and the seriousness of the first four commandments because they are about the Creator King and Lord of all creation. Gracious God help us we pray not to be arrogant but humble to know that we have certainly been unfaithful to one degree or another in our life at times and we ask Lord continued forgiveness and strength to carry on to move in the Christian walk to always keep our eyes upon you we pray amen.

Worship or divine worship as I'm using the description here is an important topic because it's about divine things that is God Almighty not mere man or things created by man or the things of creation or the animals of this world but God Almighty Father Son and Holy Spirit he who could simply cease to think about you and support you and you would no longer exist. That's the God with whom we have to deal with and nothing else. This is the divine worship that is significant.

I use the word divine worship to clarify that the object of worship is divine and not anything in creation and as you will see you're going to run across in older literature the word worship as used often to mean to honor or related words thus as I said in older literature you read about your worshipfulness. You don't usually say that anymore but you've probably run across that. That usage is still in the dictionary although it's considered archaic.

Quote used in the title of societies of skilled workers or some important officials. So it's not used in a divine sense. When you hear that you may think oh they're worshiping him as God.

No it's just an old word. It just means to honor. Worship means to honor.

Or the word is used today sometimes as a popular description of great commitment and enthusiasm. Here's an illustration from the dictionary. She was greeted by thousands of worshipful fans and I don't think any of us should take this to mean they're treating her as deity although we've run across that in Christian circles at times.

They're quick to say oh you've got another false god or whatever. No they're just very excited. That's how the word is used or used to be used.

Although I think in our circles we typically use the word worship to simply mean divine worship. We just don't put the adjective in front of it anymore and that's fine and that's pretty much how I'm going to fall into that kind of usage as well. So I don't want this to be confused with other lesser uses of the word worship.

Divine Worship Defined

It's divine worship. Divine worship defined. So as I said last week I went over the Shorter Catechism on the Second Commandment and here I want to drill in more carefully of what divine worship is and what it entails.

What do I mean by worship? What does the Bible mean by worship? It's often unclear in our circles. In my experience it seems to strike whatever fancy people have. They think that's what worship entails or is or it's touchy-feely or something and my experience again musical.

I'm worshipping God as though listening to music is more divine than reading the Word of God or praying to Him. Others reduce it to certain activities or holy days. This is usually the case in high liturgies such as the Roman Catholic and England churches.

They have special clothing, special smells and bells we call them in Presbyterian circles. But if we look at the biblical usage of worship we'll see more clearly that it is about honoring, honoring God. One Old Testament word we run across often is simply bow.

To bow down as a physical act about a number of times used clearly in the text of the Bible. It's not only the physical act but the disposition of the heart to submit and to show honor to the one before them. Of course that's supposed to be specifically for God.

That is divine worship is for God. But there is a human worship if we mean by worship honor because that same word is used with respect to other humans in the Bible. Genesis 19 1 and there came two angels to Sodom at Eden and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

That's the same act we see the prophets and others do before God right? Of course it's the same act but of course its intent is different in that act because it's God Almighty that they're giving Lot all honor and showing that honor in an outward form of bowing before him or outward form of worship. Here it's this secular or civil worship is what they used to call it honoring. It's a way of saying hello I greet you welcome here in a very serious way of course because he's bowing to the ground.

That's how they did it in the ancient Near East. It's used also in the New Testament Matthew 2 2 where is he this is the Kings right the wise men seeking Jesus where is he who has been born King of the Jews for we have seen his star in the east and have what come to worship him. I remember as a young kid reading this I thought well this is great we have these unbelievers these you know pagans I don't mean that derisively I just mean they're not Christianized or anything they're far away and they're coming to submit to Jesus and become Christians.

That's not what's going on here. I don't believe that's what's going on here at all. There's no evidence of that.

They didn't stay and say he's my Lord and say I want to be baptized I want to be you know follow Jesus. No, they came they showed it was a sign of course of the Gentiles coming to submit to Jesus ultimately. That's all of us by God's grace, but the word worship here doesn't have to mean divine all the time is my point. This text is one evidence of that it just simply means they came to honor this special person that we saw a sign for a king, this is a king. We're gonna honor a king, and the way you honor a king back then was you bowed down before him.

Glorify is another word used in the Bible to describe worship, to give honor or reverence. Of course the word, glorify, that's another word in Christian circles, in my experience that typically falls into the kind of a ,maybe it's music I'm glorifying God or I feel good. It's not that, although it concluded that, I hope it does I hope you feel good, but it's another way to talk about worship or honoring God, exalting Him. The idea of glorification is giving Him due weight, and of course He's infinitely greater than us, He therefore should be given all infinite glory worship honor and submission.

Worship of course is another translation, another, it's even another word in the in the Greek and Hebrew but some of these words of course clearly overlap. Venerate, you can translate adore especially of deity so what's interesting in the New Testament, there's a couple of words that are specifically used for divine worship. They're almost technical words and this is one of them that's often translated worship in the New Testament, or venerate. Another one is religious service you can translate ,or duty so you take all this together you say how do you define worship. You already heard it from me, honoring God that's a simple definition of it. To honor God Almighty who was and is and is to come. To honor is the simple definition. Other words in a related manner highly esteem, respect, venerate, glorify, serve, lots of synonyms. Honor, we can define more specifically, as John Colbert, one of the Puritans did on his sermon of divine worship: honor is a respect not merely to another's worth or excellence but to his superiority and power over us. You see that now? That's hard to swallow so I wanted this definition because the American scene is we're all equal before God and in the courts and there is no man greater than me. We're all on the same level playing field, and that may be the case and certainly is the case in a court setting, that you consider innocent till proven guilty. you have the same rights as everyone else. that's true. that's a very narrow thing when it comes to life. how many of you guys have gone to prison? You know, gone to the courts very often? Not very often in everyday life we know there are differences. Some people are smarter, some people are quicker, some people are better at their job, they are superior and in power over us sometimes, like our boss they can fire you that's kind of a scary thing you don't get fired whether natural he says civil or ecclesiastical you see that. So honor and worship, they recognize back then, can also be done outside of divine worship. That's why I use the word divine and the like, and it continues and as such this honor which is not just the worth or excellence of the other person I love my boss he's my best friend but particularly because he's your superior and he has power over you and such an observance of him, of course, this is God Almighty, in particular, as implies subjection. Again, another word Americans don't like to hear: wives subject themselves or submit to their husbands. Husbands and wives submit to the church, you know. And citizens submit to your kings, and your leaders, and your presidents and your judges. Words submit or subject, there's nothing wrong with. It's a good word. You want your kids to subject to you or they're gonna go crazy on you. This is how God has designed the world and He of course is the top of the pyramid.

Divine worship, not just everyday honoring, like we honor one another, God is the God of the universe and therefore all honor, esteem, respect, veneration, glorification, is due unto Him and no other. And to that degree that is another way of looking at it is He's the chief end of our existence and since all other goals and missions in life are therefore secondary to Him and underneath that great goal of honoring Him and worshiping Him. And they all come in a distant second place to His greatness and in short it is to yield to Him what is His due. Divine worship is to yield to Him. What does it do which is honor to honor him words thought and everything else now divine worship can be seen twofold way immediately and directly upon God or indirectly, we'll mention that in a bit, but specifically divine worship is explicitly and immediately and directly about God Almighty. Nothing's around Him or somewhat related to Him because everything's related to Him because He's omnipresent. But specifically upon Him, actions on Sunday but even actions throughout the week, when you pray you are what? Praying to God. Therefore that is an act of honoring Him and worshiping Him because He tells you.

If you want to be my disciples one of the things you do is you pray. You talk to me, so it's direct, it's explicit, it's about him as the object of your thought, object of your prayer, object of your reading, object of your praise. And so it's therefore not just on Sunday do you have divine worship, but throughout the week. Whenever you have an occasion, and we encourage people to have family worship time, in which you come together as a family to read the Bible, maybe sing some, and to pray what? To God. Read about God. Sing to God. Pray to God. That's worship, because he's the object of what's going on at that time ,wherever it may be.

Sunday is more formalized of course. It's a large meeting, it's a public meeting, so we're a little more careful how we do things. And we ought to be, like you would, any of the large gathering of people, to avoid chaos and scandal, what's doing to him of course. And to honor him, is to give him our heart soul mind and strength, and all that we are. That's a sum of the matter. When Jesus says what's the greatest commandment, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, sou,l mind, and strength, which is to what? Put God first. To make him the chief end of man. So all those pieces, I hope you see, come together under the concept of worship, of honoring, of putting him as our first in life, adoring him, choosing him, loving him, desiring him, fearing him. We read that in Psalm 96 two or three times there as we sang it, actually this morning, earlier, and we talked about fearing God. We fear before God, trusting him hoping, and delighting ,and rejoicing in him, being zealous for God. These are ways in which you express. Because it's about God, what worship of God.

So this time we have here is not the only time in which we have divine worship of our Lord and Savior, but it's whenever we talk about him, think about him, pray to him, it's an act of worship. Brothers and sisters, don't reduce worship to just Sunday. It's part of it. On the other hand you have people who don't ever go to church on Sunday, they think it's good enough to say be at home. You gotta have both. This will be another sermon but I want to emphasize: it's whatever you talk about God. It's not like I'm in worship, oh it's okay during the week I can just flippantly use God's name and just talk down about him and not defend his name but on Sunday I'm more serious about God. No, no. Whenever it's about God it's divine worship, and we ought to take it seriously as we'll see in the Word of God here. Now why this long intro I think it should be pretty clear because the greatest being in the universe deserves the greatest respect honor and praise. He is our creator beginning of all things. He is our sustainer. You exist right now because he upholds you by the power of his hand, not the air you breathe, not the food that you ate this morning ,those are but secondary and subsidiary to God Almighty who makes that food work in your life, who makes that air exist for you to breathe, and if he did not, you would be dead. He is the sustainer and he is our Savior and I hope he's your Savior, all of your saviors. I don't know all of you here. Our understanding of God Almighty is foundation for life and therefore divine worship. It's as I said twofold. I said specifically it's immediately about him but there's also in a mediated or indirect or remotely way of honoring God. This is the idea of all of life is worship. Maybe you heard those sayings growing up, I did and I was always a little confused, what's going on here. We have to make the distinction between explicitly thinking and talking about God praying to him and handling his things like his word and his doctrines even throughout the week you don't just curse randomly. I'm very serious about God. I'm not gonna use his name flippantly, right. But with respect to the second table of the law,

Commandments 5 through 10, you're thinking about your neighbor Jesus said. What's the second greatest commandment? To love your neighbor as yourself. God isn't explicitly your thought when you're taking care of your wife, your kids, your job site, your yard, but if I were to ask you why you're doing this a Christian, you would say to please my Lord, because God tells me to do it and this is a way to honor him. That's what you mean by indirect. It's not immediately on your thoughts and on your minds. You have a lot more freedom and that those other Commandments in many ways do these things to take care of your family, to work as a good citizen of this nation, lots of freedom in the first four Commandments. You don't have that kind of freedom, brothers sisters, that's the point of the sermon. Divine worship is much more restricted. Our sermon here is about, of course, honoring God directly and immediately by the acts that we have when we say his name, or explicitly act towards him. It is about him and nobody else. We worship him in the sense of honoring him. Honoring his word, listening to it carefully throughout the week, praying to him carefully, and not with anger of course, towards him. You control yourself. That way this is reverent, this is worshipful, this is the first four Commandments, which is further divided, and I won't spend a lot of time on this. As you recall, a Sunday school class of natural instituted worship, that natural worship is what all of us know without the Bible. Unbelievers know God exists, Romans 1:18 and that they suppress the truth and a righteousness, it says, Romans 1:18 look it up. There are no atheists what I can tell people there aren't, they're fooling you. They know that God exists. They can't help but know Him. The way the universe is designed and everything else, where you go into science, as I did by God's grace, and others of you have. The more you see it, and because of that knowledge, they know. They have to submit to Him. They have to follow him and they have to pray to him, even that's natural worship. That's the natural knowledge they have of God and the concomitant or the natural moral consequences of responsibility towards Him. That must follow instituted is what's found in the Word of God is obviously overlap you're gonna read about prayer in the Bible although it's natural and praise although that's natural worship as well but it's found in the Bible because the Bible has lots of natural stuff going on because God created both.

Divine Worship Detailed

Divine worship in detail, while we talk about divine worship on our circles, I know we have visitors here and you're not familiar with this, we call it the Regulative Principle of Worship. It is not unique to Presbyterians it's a Protestant doctrine outside the Lutheranism. So you have the Lutherans, perhaps you run across them, and then you have the non-Lutherans, or the other Protestants that would be either reformed they're called sometimes, or Presbyterian, or Congregationalist. They too take seriously the worship of God and have a regulative principle of worship. Now the regulative principle worship is, you already hear from the title, means something different about worship. That is what, divine worship in particular, about God directly and explicitly that there's a lot of restrictions on it because he's such a holy and Almighty God and a precious Lord and Savior for us that we want to do things that are pleasing to Him and not to us. One of the misunderstandings is that, of this doctrine that we teach that we have to have a Bible verse for the chair that you sit on, the building that you use, the frequency of the elements, how often you preach or pray. No, we don't, that's not what it teaches. It teaches: that which is explicitly about God, an act before Him, like prayer, of course, you can pray in your heart, but you pray with your mouth.

Second commandment is explicitly about ten outward forms, idols we read bowing down to idols, those are outward forms those acts of worship are supposed to be acts that He wants us to do, not what you feel like you got to do. And I point out the natural worship in so far as we don't have to have a verse about specifically bowing or not bowing ,or sitting or standing. No, there's different ways in which you can express honor in different societies. That's fine, and so you'll find different ways of doing that. Even Christian churches throughout the centuries. That's fine, but other things, like how many sacraments are there, well you already know there's difference between us and the Roman Catholics. They have seven, we have two. Why they get seven parts of that is because they go by tradition. We argue you can't go by tradition, you have to go to the Word of God because He regulates worship. And you would never have figured out those other things as sacraments without human tradition coming in and bringing them in to the church. But if you went to the Word of God you would say, "Oh clearly the Lord's Supper Jesus makes it," and Paul says in first Corinthians 11 let's all do it. The churches are acting this thing out called the Lord's Supper and baptism of course, isn't the Great Commission there when Jesus says "go baptize the nations" you would not have been able to baptize the nations.

Another way of looking at it will not have come up with that way of doing things to make disciples of this world on your own unless you read the Word of God. And if you made it on your own I hope all Christians would say there's something wrong. Why are you running around making up new things that you say Jesus says it's okay with? So instead of baptizing, you think it's okay to put a cloth on their head? You put a cloth on their head that makes them a Christian? That, that's their version of baptism. Like, no, where's that? Where do you find that? I hope even those who don't agree with us, the regulative principle worship, is like where did you get that why did you make up off the top of your head? And we are contending the Bible tells us in the second commandment and elsewhere, you can't make up things on your own head when it comes to direct divine worship of God. That's the point. It seems pretty innocent, everyone likes it, it's very popular to put a cloth on their head, it covers their face, they think it's kind of cool, draw people in the church, and our answer is it doesn't matter. Thus saith the Lord. You can't find it. Thus saith the Lord it's nowhere, the will of God is clear: you don't honor him the way you honor yourself or what you find comfortable. People who do this and denominations who do this, who make up whole cloth ways of honoring him, they call it formal worship, and liturgy, and whatnot without His will. It's like the husband who buys a shotgun for his wife for Christmas, we all know what's going on there right it's really for him. That's the equivalent is that honoring her is honoring God making up things you think honors Him. No, that's the way that's that's that's it in a nutshell . It's finished a sermon there you go that's what we read in the second commandment.

Now the second commandment uses the very explicit and detailed concern because it was a big concern back then of little idols made of wood and stone and they actually bowed their body before them. And we are arguing that's just but a sample of all the other different ways in which people make up worship before God and call it holy when it's not. Because the Ten Commandments are a summary of God's law, if continue reading the rest of the Exodus you find he gives a lot of details that aren't in the Ten Commandments because they are summary for easy for us to digest. That's the point, and so the regulative principle of worship is just but the second commandment applied to direct divine worship of God, which

is throughout our life. We don't believe in images of Jesus. Bible says very clearly: don't make an image of Me, neither male nor female, because you saw nothing on the mount when you came to the mount. Of course not! Because God is a spirit. You can't see anything. We haven't seen Jesus either. If He wanted us to have a picture of Jesus, He would give us a picture of Jesus like He gave a picture of the temple even how to build the temple. He didn't do any of that so we can't come along and make these things up. Now the Pharisees did a similar thing in Mark chapter 7 verse 1: "Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, that is Jesus, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled hands, that is with unwashed hands, they found fault, for the Pharisees," that Mark's explaining what's going on here, "for the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way." So the point isn't they didn't have clean hands or eating with dirty hands that's what we think today. It's ceremonial, it's a moral activity what with respect to God it's a special way of eating food that's honoring to Him. It's direct worship. That's the point, when they came from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash and there are many other things which they have received and hold that is traditions like washing of cups pitchers copper vessels and couches because when he interacted with the goyim and the non-jews they felt dirty morally speaking ceremonially speaking right symbolically speaking and they had they made up these extra washings that were not found in the Word of God everyone with me it says it very clearly here that's what's going on Jesus answered and said in vain they worship me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men he says you can't do that that's a man-made commands a made-up thing like putting a cloth on your head or seven sacraments instead of two that's the second commandment in a nutshell right here Mark 7, Jesus had come alongside have destroyed the second commandment he reinforced it he made it even more clear commandments the Word of God when it comes to direct divine worship must come from explicit verses, good necessary deductions of those verses or the natural acts of worship as we see enacted by the disciples when they met, like I don't know, on Sunday, and it's literally called what? The Lord's Day! That tells us something's going on here, There's something special here different from the Old Testament because there's a difference the whole ceremonial is done away with and our ceremonies today are much more reduced and simple Lord's Supper baptism.

These, and I'll stop here, elements of the New Testament era of worship, both everyday life because whenever you read the Bible it's reading about God it's praying to God and like meditating upon his word and of course on the Lord's Day is generally broken down in the old writers between word and prayer what are the elements of worship pastor if you're not talking about chairs and how often you do the elements and even how you dress although all these of course are controlled by common-sense activities like avoid getting sick and avoid the dangers the environment that's all a given that's not what we're talking about we're talking about what about the particular act is it about God and if it is where do you find it can you give evidence for it right in his will and they broke those elements of worship, we call them as word and prayer from Acts 6.

"For I think we will give ourselves," the Apostle says, "continually to write prayer and the ministry of the word," the word as the word received given to us to God's word revealed his desire towards us in prayer is our desire towards God as he says in our shorter catechism prayers and offering up of what of our desires into God. So on the one hand the Word of God is his desires for us revealed to us, our prayers are our desires revealed and given to

God. Of course he reads our heart or anyways and the Word of God is preached listen to read meditated upon prayer is our desires before God it's part of our worship throughout the week and even on Sunday and under prayer and the again the over theologians often put singing or praise I like to say preaching prayer and praise and participating in the sacraments say that five times fast and put praise in a prayer right to sing psalms hymns and spiritual songs those are the elements I won't go any further than that unless we grow weary it's a lot to handle I know but the end of the day brothers and sisters you honor your spouse your best friend and your boss how by what they want not what you want and the first four commandments are what God wants for us to honor Him. Let us pray. Indeed God Almighty may we re-evaluate our lives and our hearts if we have a misunderstanding, Lord, and meditate upon these passages, Mark 7, Exodus 20, Hosea 3:3, to help us learn a better and anew, we pray, but especially, God Almighty, for those who are not believers, for those who are confused about what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, that we are called, as the first four commandments tell us, to put you first. You are the greatest and therefore our lives should be an alignment with your will. Our God and Savior, may we continue to read your Bible that we may know your will anew. Be with us, we pray, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit by the blood of Christ, Amen.