

Swept off your Feet

Beyond Worship-as-Usual

Connecting with God for a Strong Finish

PART IV

Galvanized for Worship

When Push comes to Shove—Which Direction will you Bow?

CHAPTER 30

Where Multitudes Gather



God's priority in finding worshipers does not revolve around a location; it revolves around a person. Jesus emphasized this fact long ago by revealing the truth about Himself and about our Heavenly Father.

When the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well realized that Jesus was more than an ordinary man, the first question on her lips dealt with an appropriate location for worship. She said:

"I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." (John 4:19-20 NIV)

In response, Jesus asserted the future without making location irrelevant or inconsequential. With prophetic insight, He said:

"Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." (John 4:21 NIV)

Jesus did not endorse Mount Gerizim as an official site for worship in Samaria. Situated near the West Bank city of Nablus (Old Testament Shechem), Mount Gerizim rises 881 meters (2849 feet) above sea level.¹ It is one of the highest mountain peaks in Israel.

Likewise, Jesus did not endorse Mount Moriah as an official site for worship in Jerusalem. The Jewish Temple built by Solomon, destroyed by Babylon, rebuilt by Nehemiah, and embellished by Herod had operated on Moriah. Designating an official worship site was not the take away message from this conversation.

Complete in Christ, all believers serve as the temple of the Holy Spirit. They worship their Heavenly Father in spirit and truth as royal priests. Rituals and ceremonies performed according to Levitical laws have served their redemptive purpose along with their symbolic types and shadows. The need for spotless sacrifices on sacred altars by sanctified priests no longer exists. Burnt offerings are an unnecessary task because the blood of Christ atones for our sins. Jesus is the Lamb of God. He offered Himself once for all to consummate a better covenant with better promises.²

Jerusalem no longer holds preeminence for religious activity since One greater than its temple has arrived. No matter where worshipers assemble, Jesus promises to be present. He always dwells everywhere and most notably, He abides within redeemed sinners.

In the end, worshipers and warriors will gravitate toward strategic locations. Where will they gather to meet their Father's gaze? When will they generate the response that He deserves? Who will dominate the battlefields in the future? Who, when, and where?

During times of unprecedented warfare, all worshipers will respond one way or another. Some will worship openly while others respond with reserve. Will true worshipers resort to stealth and solitude or burst into the open with the stellar enthusiasm of the heavenly hosts?

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Gerizim (accessed 8-7-07)

² Hebrews 7:22 and Hebrews 8:6 respectively

Worshippers Bow on the Ground they Occupy

When war breaks out, soldiers find a place to fight. They deliberately assemble where they might leverage a tactical advantage, either to defend or to attack. Military leaders gravitate toward strategic locations because geography affects the outcome of battle. They maneuver their troops and engage their weapons with calculated discretion.

When worshipers gather, they too consider the quality and significance of their location. Usually, they congregate in homes, churches, synagogues, cathedrals, conventions centers, stadiums, or arenas. While the focus of worship centers on venerating God, worshipers do more than fall facedown to express reverence. They also receive what the Holy Spirit may offer, they confess sins, assert declarations, give thanks, make intercession, submit petitions, and articulate praise with or without music, song, or dance.

Attentive worshipers understand the functional dynamics associated with their basic human needs. Some venues accommodate large gatherings better than others, especially when worshipers convene to proclaim praise accompanied by music. Stadiums, arenas, and convention centers facilitate practical conveniences such as food, drink, electricity, parking, security, hotels, medical support, and toilets.

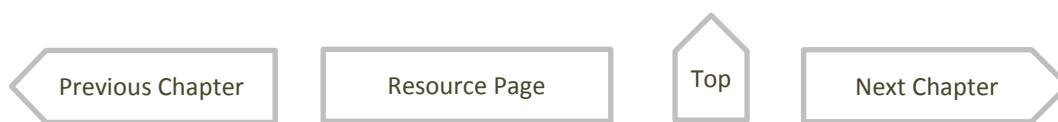
Public Praise and Open Worship

Throughout history, our Heavenly Father has ordained special times to accommodate special assemblies in special places for special reasons. Informed worshipers recognize God's timing as it relates to geographic domains. A new season has emerged. It does not confine God's presence to a sacred mountain, a chosen city, or a holy temple. Unlike decrees found in the Old Covenant, the New Covenant does not emphasize an exclusive place for an exclusive priesthood to perform exclusive activities nicknamed as worship. God loves the entire world. He wants universal participation from persons everywhere.

When demonic powers demand global homage, what type of response will true worshipers offer their Heavenly Father? Will they worship Him publically or bow privately? Will they prostrate themselves outside gated communities or conceal themselves with discreet caution? Will worshipers praise Him openly or resort to covert isolation in clandestine chapels? When are worshipers going to burst into the open with the stellar enthusiasm of the heavenly host, praising God as victorious overcomers, declaring a valiant testimony—not loving their own life even unto death?³

What will distinguish worshipers who worship their Heavenly Father in spirit and truth from those who worship idols or Satan? How will they differ from petrified pawns and bedeviled parrots reacting in fear? How will worshipers respond when demonic intimidation intensifies? Will they act with intrepid courage or become inconspicuous and tentative? How will they worship when terror and panic coerce entire nations to compromise their convictions by submitting to Satan’s agenda?

What type of response shall true believers muster when Satan’s slaves display public obeisance en masse to the Dragon, the Beast, the Antichrist, or some other impostor posing as a deity? How, when, and where will true worshipers worship their Heavenly Father?



³ Revelation 12:11