



### Part 5

2005 was a really bad year for Maria Rubio. Her granddaughter took one of her tortilla's to school for show and tell but in the process, it fell and broke into several pieces. Granted, for you and I, a broken tortilla would not be a big deal at all. But this was no ordinary tortilla. On the morning of October 5, 1977, as Maria was preparing breakfast for her husband, Eduardo, she discovered that one of the tortillas had what looked like the image of Jesus burnt onto it.<sup>1</sup> Her prized Jesus tortilla was housed in a shrine at her home for 28 years. Tens of thousands of people visited the Jesus tortilla to see the miracle in New Mexico. The Jesus tortilla was the unofficial start of other copycats such as the image of Jesus on a piece of toast. Such religious displays seem ridiculous to use but millions of people see them as a form of genuine worship. The broken tortilla is still sitting inside a frame on a bed of cotton balls but it does not have the original devotion that it once did.

I know I chose a bizarre example to start with but much of what has fit under the banner of worship over the years and centuries is no less bizarre. And I'm not talking about crazy cults in the middle of the desert. I am referring to so-called Christian worship. Even those of us in this room have taken part in a wide variety of Christian worship in our day.

What is worship? How do we worship? How do we know if we have left Biblical boundaries and entered into the bizarre? The story of the woman at the well is not all that the Bible has to say about worship but it is a definitive statement from the words of Jesus. First, let me remind you where we have been the last five weeks.

1. The Reliability and Sufficiency of the Mission.
2. How to Share the Mission.
3. The Results of the Mission—Worship

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

In order to uncover the truth about worship in this text, before we can understand what Jesus was teaching, we need to understand why the Samaritan woman did not have it right. Verse 21 is a key verse. *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.* Let's review what we know about the Samaritans and their worship. The Jews hated the Samaritans because they were half breeds—a mixture of Jews and Gentiles mixed together by the King of Assyria after the fall of Israel. Remember we discovered that by their own repeated idolatry, the Jews actually created the Samaritan people. The Israelites—God's chosen people who had every possible direction from God about how to worship, failed again and again to do it properly.

You will remember that the Samaritans only followed the first five books of the Bible—the Pentateuch—the Law of Moses. They rejected the rest of the Old Testament which the Jews, of course, embraced as their ongoing history and revelation of God to them. There are two important things we need to understand. One, both groups thought that they were right and two, both groups were basing their authority on what they considered to be the word of God.

Think of it like this. Is it wrong for us to add anything to the word of God? Are the apocryphal books equal to the Bible? How about the Infancy Gospel of Thomas where a five year-old Jesus kills another boy. "After that again he went through the village, and a child ran and dashed against his shoulder. And Jesus was provoked and said unto him: Thou shalt not finish thy course. And immediately he fell down and died."<sup>2</sup> What do you think? Does that sound like infallible Scripture to you? Chris Eisermann likes to add new verses to a worship song every once in a while. What if he wrote a short book and he called it the "Book of Chris" and claimed that it should be added to the end of your Bible? Would you do it?

Of course we would not add these things to Scripture because they are clearly not the infallible word of God. The Samaritans rejected the rest of the Bible for the very same reasons. They felt as if the Jews were adding to the true Scriptures with books that were not the infallible word of God. So they felt perfectly justified in making this decision. So when Jesus said, *the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father*, Jesus' point was not the difference between Jewish worship and Samaritan worship. Samaritan worship was not wrong, it was just incomplete. As we have seen, Mt. Gerizim was the epicenter of the

Promised Land and the center of worship until Jerusalem took over. Therefore, Mt. Gerizim represents approximately the first one thousand years of Jewish worship and Jerusalem represents the second one-thousand years of Jewish worship.

What we are talking about here is what is called Redemptive History. Redemptive history is simply God's plan of salvation revealed throughout history. Here's a simple way to understand it. When Adam and Eve sinned, God killed a couple animals and made a covering of skin for them. What he did not do was to send Jesus to earth to die for their sins. That is redemptive history.

Of course God had always planned to send Jesus. Believers were chosen from before the foundation of the world so Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection was always the greater plan. I don't want you to think that redemptive history means that God was just kind of making stuff up as he went. "OK, let's try the Ten Commandments. Well that didn't work so well. What about prophets and kings. Fail. What if I sent my Son down there to fix it?" No, no, a thousand times no. God is not changing his mind but he is revealing his plan one step at a time. And this is what we see with Samaritan and Jewish worship. The Samaritans were absolutely correct to have held to the Pentateuch. That was God's perfect plan up until that time, but it was not his complete plan.

This helps to explain today's Judaism. It is just like the Samaritans. Instead of cutting off at the first five books of the Bible, they cut it off at the first 39 books. The Samaritans only accepted revelation from God based on the first 600 years of redemptive history. The Jews in Jesus' day based their Scriptures on the first 1600 years of redemptive history. As Christians we base our faith—and the Scriptures—on the first 2100 years of redemptive history. We accept the first 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament.

So you see that the foundation of all true worship is having the right Scriptures. If you get that wrong, the whole thing crumbles. It gets even more interesting because all major cults are based on Judaism or Christianity—or both. Islam accepts most of the OT and the person of Jesus, but not his deity. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are based on the whole Bible but they change some of it. Christian Science is obviously based on Christianity, though they make up different definitions for the same words, stories and concepts. Liberal Christians "accept" all of the Bible—in theory—but then proceed to pick and choose at will what they decide is correct and what is not.

How many of you are familiar with the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project? It is more popularly known as Jonestown, where 909 Americans were killed by drinking cyanide laced Kool-aid. This began as a "Christian" movement but quickly morphed into Marxist-Communist. There were only a handful of survivors and here is the testimony of one survivor.

"I always looked at the Temple as a utopian community that used religion to get where we were wanting to go. Other people took it as Christ's way. There's a passage in the Bible where Jesus tells people to leave their families and follow him. Jim quoted that quite a lot. He said he was Gandhi, Buddha, Lenin—he said he was the coming back of anybody you'd ever want to come back. And we believed him."<sup>3</sup>

It is both wonderful and absolutely frightening that everyone wants to worship something. That's one message you see all through the Bible and all through history. God called Abram out of paganism only to have his descendants revert right back to their roots. The Samaritans had always worshipped on Mt. Gerizim and they still worship today on Mt. Gerizim, although there are less than 1000 adherents.<sup>4</sup>

The Samaritan woman was a worshipper but it was not based on knowledge. That's why Jesus said, *22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.* The Samaritans worshipped "what they did not know" because their revelation was incomplete. They did not know God because they had rejected his full revelation. They had a very partial understanding.

The Bible is clear that the law was given as a "planned obsolescence." It was not wrong in any sense whatsoever. The law is holy, righteous and good but it was never intended to stand for all time. The remaining 1400 years of Jewish history showed very clearly that the Law was incapable of saving man. All of the judges, kings and prophets could not steer Israel and Judah away from captivity and destruction.

Why is God's full plan of salvation now standing talking to the Samaritan woman at the well and said to her: *23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.* When Jesus said "the hour is now here" he was referring to himself. Jesus was the final step in God's plan of redemptive history. Over 4000 years of redemptive history had culminated in this one man—Jesus Christ. As the people living in the town of Sychar soon realized and freely confessed: *for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."*

Jesus eliminated the need to worship on Mt. Gerizim or in Jerusalem. Jesus fulfilled the Law, paid the penalty of sin, broke down the barrier wall of hostility and opened the door to eternal life. Worship was no longer a place but became wholly a person.

But if it had always been God's plan to transcend worship at either place, why did Abram build an altar at Shechem? Why did God prescribe the minutest details for building the Tabernacle? Why did it take years to construct Solomon's Temple which would become the center of all worship? If worshipping God in spirit and in truth had always been his plan, why all of the trappings of the law and centralized worship.

God did have very specific details about worship. This is why most of us don't enjoy reading the book of Leviticus very much. I recently finished it in my devotional reading. It's not the first place I would send a new believer but it is essential reading for all believers. Because the more we understand the details of sacrificial worship the more we understand the true meaning of worshipping in spirit and in truth. Because even these rigid details contained the heart of the gospel.

I am going to read from three different Old Testament passages and in each case, they were spoken to people who failed to understand true worship. The first are Samuel's famous words spoken to King Saul.

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,  
as in obeying the voice of the LORD?  
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,  
and to listen than the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22).

Next are the words of Hosea to the idolatrous Israelites.  
For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,  
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6).

Finally, here is the word of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah  
For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. **23** But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you’ (Jeremiah 7:22-23).

Do you see the same message each time? What God wants is our heart response of obedience. I especially appreciate the Jeremiah passage because of the setting. What did the Lord do after he brought them out of Egypt? He gave them the Law on Mt. Sinai, right? Why then did the Lord say he did not speak to them about burnt offerings and sacrifices? Do you see, even in the midst of deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the Ten Commandments through Moses—at the very pinnacle of that event, God was saying it's all about obedience and matters of the heart. The Law was given to lead us to Christ, not enslave us in heartless worship.

Let me give you my working definition of worship and then we'll unpack it.

**Worship is** our Holy Spirit empowered response of obedience to God's infinite mercy and love which permeates every area of our daily lives.

Let's unpack this a phrase at a time. Worship is our Holy Spirit empowered response of obedience. This is the kind of worshipper that the Father is seeking. He has always been seeking this kind of worshipper. The Law did not change this fact because God's people have always been saved by...what? By faith. Hebrews 11 tells us that from Adam to Zechariah, everyone had always been saved by faith. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not have the Law, but they had faith. Moses did have the law but he also had faith. David had the Law and 400 years of oral history of his people, but he also had faith expressed through obedience. But this obedience must be a Holy Spirit empowered obedience. Your action either arise from the flesh or they flow from the Holy Spirit.

But obedience—even obedience empowered by the Holy Spirit, is a response of obedience to something, to someone. We obey out of a response to God's infinite mercy and love. We love because he first loved us. All of life is a response to this mercy and love. But we to respond to it because we fail to grasp it, to love it. To be enthralled by it. If we knew this infinite mercy, then obedience would flow more freely.

I want to read seven verses from Ephesians chapter two that are among my all-time favorite descriptions of God's infinite mercy and love.

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:1-7).

That is a mere glimpse of what we respond to. That is worship in spirit and truth. It's head and heart co-mingled into genuine worship. But what does that look like? Is worship what we do on Sunday morning? Is worship the 6 or 7 songs we sing? There are three Greek words for worship and none of them have to do with music. Granted, angels and Christians in the Bible make music to the Lord, so it is absolutely one expression of worship but only one expression of worship.

Worship is our Holy Spirit empowered response of obedience to God's infinite mercy and love which permeates every area of our daily lives. The main two words for worship in the New testament mean to reverence or bow down and to serve and minister<sup>5</sup>. So worship is not just a strong feeling that you have, though again, that is absolutely part of it. Worship is to reverence God and to serve God through our obedience.

That is why worship must permeate every area of our life. There is no area of your life that is not touched by worship. In verse 34, Jesus said to his disciples, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." Jesus was saying that worship and obedience permeated every area of his life. He obeyed his Father in every possible way.

Can you think of any area into which worship does not enter? What about money—how you make it, how you spend it, how you give it? Is that worship? How about your work life? How you treat your co-workers, your attitude toward your boss if you have one and the way you treat your employees if you have any—these are areas of worship. The way you parent your children is worship. Your hobbies, your free time, the amount and type of media you consume. When you obey, you worship. When you grumble, complain, lust, rage and gossip, you are not worshipping.

All of these areas of life are a response to truths found in passages like Ephesians 2. Worship is our Holy Spirit empowered response of obedience to God's infinite mercy and love which permeates every area of our daily lives.

**Rich Maurer**  
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<sup>1</sup> <http://thetortillakid.com/the-history-of-the-tortilla/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://gnosis.org/library/inftoma.htm>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/11/drinking-the-kool-aid-a-survivor-remembers-jim-jones/248723/>

<sup>4</sup> In 529 AD, the Roman Emperor outlawed their religion and killed most of the Samaritans. Later, they were persecuted by the Muslims.

<sup>5</sup> Proskuneo—to bow down, to reverence; Latreuo—serve, to minister