

OLD UNION BAPTIST MINISTERS SCHOOL
BOWLING GREEN, KY
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MAN'S HIGHEST OCCUPATION

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SCRIPTURE READING – Ecclesiastes 12:1-7; and 13-14

DEFINING THE LESSON TITLE

MAN – Mankind: male and female; the creation of God, made in his own likeness and after his own image. (Genesis 1:27)

HIGHEST – The top rank established by the order of importance; the number one priority.

OCCUPATION – That which occupies our time.

My lesson says that the whole duty of man is to ***“fear God, and keep his commandments:”*** and it also gives us the reason for doing so; ***“for God shall bring every work into judgment”***. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Between the birth date and the death date is the life span: it is referred to as ***“the days of our years”*** (Psalms 90:10) and hopefully consists of lots of what we call time. The life span is also said to be, ***“of few days and full of trouble”***. (Job 14:1) Our reading lesson also describes, in symbolic terms, the ageing process, which begins at birth and ends in death. Therefore we are instructed: ***“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”*** (Psalms 90:12)

WORSHIP AND SERVICE

I want to get right to the point: ***“Worshipping and Serving God”*** is indeed ***“Man’s Highest Occupation”***. And it should be a full time job. Jesus made that quite clear when he quoted the scripture to Satan. He said, ***“it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”*** (Matthew 4:10)

The first two, written, commandments tell us, ***“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”***: and that ***“God is a jealous God”***; therefore, we must not bow before idol gods, nor serve them. (Ex. 20:3-5)

The chief purpose of man is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever. The Psalmist said, ***“Thou wilt shew me the path of life:”*** (Psalms 16:11) Again, the Psalmist says, ***“O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy:”*** ***“And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.”*** ... ***“For he satisfied the longing soul, and filled the hungry soul with goodness.”*** (Psalms 107:1, 2, 7, and 9)

Jeremiah said, ***“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man to direct his own steps.”*** (Jeremiah 10:23) ***“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way.”*** (Psalms 37:23) Then notice the words of Isaiah, ***“... he will be very gracious unto the voice of thy cry; when he shall***

hear it, he will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers. And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:19-21)

Look again at Psalms 16:11. He not only shows us the path of life, but *“in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”* There is fullness of joy now, in time, and there will be pleasures at his right hand for evermore.

THE MEANING OF WORSHIP

In the KJV, the word **“worship”** is first mentioned in (Genesis 22:5). The Hebrew word, from which our English word, worship, was translated, is **“SHAW KHAW”** and means **“to prostrate one’s self in homage to God”** (fall, face down, on the ground, with reverence, and in honor, and ready to serve). And, the context of that verse proves the definition. The same word **“worship”** is used again, **“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.”** (Psalms 95:6)

It seems that many people have the mind-set that worship consists of spending an hour at a church building on Sunday morning. (a few include Sunday night and Wednesday night) This is indeed part of worship, but a small part.

True worship is more than drawing near with the mouth, and giving honor with the lips. Anyone and everyone can do that, even when the heart is far from the Lord. (See Matthew 15:1-9) Of that kind of worship, Jesus said, **“In vain do they worship me,...”** **It is the duty of those of us who are pastors, to change that mind-set.**

I’m not too concerned, in this lesson, with the order of public worship, nor with what may, or may not take place in a church service. I do believe there is a proper mode for church services, such as: singing, praying, preaching, testifying, and altar calls, etc. All of these things make up a public worship service. **But this alone does not fulfill “Man’s Highest Occupation”.**

One can attend a worship service, and never worship; listen to prayers, and never pray; sing songs, yet never make melody in his heart to the Lord; listen to a sermon, and be a hearer of the Word, but not a doer of the Word. This is called “Formalism”. I do not mean to under-state the value of attending and participating in public worship services. But, I truly believe we were **“Born to serve the Lord”**.

I like the English version of the word worship: It is **“worth-ship”**! And it means, attributing and ascribing worth and value. The Apostle John said, **“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”** (Revelation 4:11)

Everything we do in our public worship is an appraisal (consideration) of God’s worth to us. In our songs we praise him; in our prayers we petition his assistance. In our testimonies we declare how he has blessed us, in our preaching we proclaim Him God Almighty: the all knowing Lord and Savior; full of mercy; not willing for any to perish, and ready to save. That is a part of his worth, and the reason for worship to be a way of life. **God should never be thought of as just an available resource of power in case we need him.**

Paul said, at Mars’ Hill, **“... He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things:”** and **“For in him we live, and move and have our being; ...”** Acts 17:25 and 28)

I like the old “Colored Spiritual” (?) that says, I need him every morning, I need him every night, I need him every moment, when the sun is shining bright. Isn’t it wonderful that our **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”** (Psalms 46:1)

Man’s highest occupation is expressing what God means to us, by and through our life style, as well as by our words. Mankind has a need to worship, and will worship something. That is why God has given commandments to us, forbidding us to make idols and bow down before them. (Exodus 20:3-5)

Those who are wise fill that need to worship by giving themselves to God, and making peace with him. Those with less discernment choose to give themselves to something else. **It is sad, but many who profess to be worshippers of God, sacrifice their families to the gods of sports; pleasure; success, and etc.**

Abraham showed the worth of God in his life in so many ways. It all began when the “God of Glory” appeared to him and called him. (Acts 7:2) **“By faith he obeyed”** trusting in the word of God. (Hebrews 11:8) **He confessed he was a stranger in the land, and his life style proved it. He lived in tabernacles, while “looking for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker was God.”** (Hebrews 11:9-10)

Abraham believed in hope, when there was no hope! **“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”** (Romans 4:18-21)

And when God said, **“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering”** ... **Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took two of his young men, and Isaac, and headed for the place God had told him. And after three days, he saw the place, and said to the young men; “I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come to you again”.** When Isaac inquired, **“Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the sacrifice?”** Abraham answered, **“My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.”** (Genesis 22:1-14) And God did provide, not just for Abraham and Isaac, but he provided a lamb for all of us, in the person of Jesus Christ.

In closing, I want to say a few words about what Jesus said in (John 4:23-24). The woman of Samaria had brought up the question of where men should worship. **“Jesus saith unto her, ... the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: (for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth.**

God is a Spirit, and man has a spirit: Man’s spirit was placed within him when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The Hebrew word for the human spirit that was breathed into man is **NASH AW MAW**; and not only means life, but it also means, **rational intellect**. The word for the Holy Spirit is **PNEUMA**: which means that God is a rational intelligent Spirit. For man to worship in spirit, means he must deliberately and rationally yield and submit his ways to God.

The **GREEK** word for “truth” is **AL AY THI A** and means practice according to the doctrine as well as the profession. To worship **“in spirit and in truth”** requires a correct spiritual knowledge of God, and what it means to worship. **That goes to establish motive!** We must also have the right mental attitude, and we must practice the doctrine, as well as profess to believe it.