

# Worship, A Divine Appointment

Deuteronomy 12:6–32

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*“ . . . Then it shall come about that the place in which the Lord your God shall choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the Lord. . . . ” (12:6–32).*

God is the only one who knows and can prescribe what is acceptable to Him. Therefore, worship to Him must have divine regulations. Israel could not follow customs or devise that which was not commanded by God.

Worship to God cannot be done ignorantly with the use of manmade objects and be acceptable (Acts 17:22–31). Worship arbitrarily invented, devised by man’s own self-will, even though it has a reputation of wisdom and greatness, cannot be sanctioned unless it harmonizes with God’s will (Colossians 2:23).

Israel had seen firsthand the practice of “will worship” in Egypt and the nations of Canaan. In 12:6–32, Moses laid the foundation for Israel’s worship to the Lord of heaven and earth. It was a public appointment with specific purposes and restrictions and filled with joyous celebration for all God had done for Israel.

## A PUBLIC APPOINTMENT

Throughout our text, 12:6–32, we see that worship was of divine command:

*“But you shall seek the Lord at the place which the Lord your God shall choose. . . . And there you shall bring. . . . There also you and your households shall eat before the Lord your God, . . . ” (12:5–7).*

*“There you shall bring all that I command you . . . there you shall offer your burnt offerings . . . ” (12:11, 14).*

*“Only your holy things which you may have and your votive offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the Lord chooses” (12:26).*

The people could not do in their homeland what they had been accustomed to doing while on their way (12:8). Instead of setting up here and there a holy place for the Lord and everyone doing as he saw fit, they would now come to the one place chosen by the Lord for their worship.

Worship was to be a continual and ongoing appointment as long as they lived on the earth (12:1). It was to be carefully observed, for it was made by God Himself. It was not an appointment to seek and find entertainment. Nor was it an appointment to attend to worldly matters, for it was not to be a house of merchandise (Luke 19:45, 46). It was an appointment to fulfill the purposes of the Lord.

Those who desert the public worship are even reproved in the New Testament: “Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some. . . .” (Hebrews 10:25). All of God’s people need to worship together regularly at the appointed time.

The years of togetherness in families usually bond strong relationships between parents and children and between brothers and sisters. The same thing is basically true in the church. In worship, Christians share their praise and needs with the Father. Together they are comforted by His truth and offer their gifts and their lives in His service. The assembling of God’s children brings its own blessings, for we see that wor-

shipping with other Christians helps us and deepens our appreciation as no other experience can do. God saw a need and planned accordingly for the benefit of His people both in the Old and New Testaments.

### **AN APPOINTMENT FOR DIVINE PURPOSES**

Israel was to “seek the Lord” at the appointed place of worship (12:5). They were to come to God’s place for a purpose and anticipate the fulfilling of that purpose. Worship was to be a time of sacrifices, giving, and dedication to the Lord.

“And there you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock” (12:6).

“Then it shall come about that the place in which the Lord your God shall choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings . . . .” (12:11).

To the place of God’s choosing Israel was to bring her offerings, such as burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, heave offerings, vows, freewill offerings, and the firstborn of the herds and flocks. (See also 12:13, 14, 17, 26, 27.) Animals which were God’s provision for food could be killed in their home communities in Canaan instead of at the tabernacle as had been the restriction during their encampments (12:13–28; 15:21–23).

### **A RESTRICTED APPOINTMENT**

No sacrifice was to be made to Jehovah except at the place where He prescribed. Moses gave a stern warning:

Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every cultic place you see, but in the place which the Lord chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you (12:13, 14).

Only in that place were the people to banquet together in His presence to celebrate His goodness and achievements (12:10–12).

A restriction prohibiting the use of blood in their worship feasts and also in their homes is

repeated:

“Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water” (12:16).

“Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. You shall not eat it, in order that it may be well with you and your sons after you, . . .” (12:23–25).

As God’s people, they were to recognize blood as the symbol and vital element of life itself, especially in bringing sacrifices (Leviticus 17:10–12; Genesis 9:4–6). Any person or beast guilty of shedding blood had to forfeit his own life.

“And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:5, 6).

As the blood was identical with life and represented the soul of the victim, God appointed it as a substitute for the sinner’s life:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.’ Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, ‘No person among you may eat blood, nor may any alien who sojourns among you eat blood’” (Leviticus 17:11, 12).

As a result of this representation and appointment, the life of the sacrifice was an atonement for the life of the offender. It was upon this foundation that the writer to the Hebrews declared “. . . without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

The fact that life is in the blood cannot be separated from the grand plan of the redemption of the world through the Savior. By shedding His blood in sacrifice of Himself, Jesus gave His perfect life for our sinful ones. We can be thankful that He died and shed His precious blood for us, blood that cleanses us from all our sin.

And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12).

Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a

lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

## A JOYOUS APPOINTMENT

Joy was to be a distinctive characteristic of all the worship:

“There also your households shall eat before the Lord your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you” (12:7).

“And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, . . .” (12:12).

“But you shall eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all your undertakings” (12:18).

All household members were to take part in happy feasting in the Lord’s presence. They were to rejoice in God’s blessings with their families, their servants, and the Levites. Deuteronomy should be viewed as a happy book, full of the joys of people who realized that God cared for them. As they reflected on God’s protection for them in the past, the Israelites knew that He loved them and would care for them in the future.

There is a place for joy as well as meditation in the presence of God. “Rejoicing before the Lord” is missing in too many of us as we assemble. Public worship is to include a celebration of God’s greatness and love.

Gratitude or thanksgiving for what God has done is an essential part of real worship.

It is that part of the worship experience in which we count our blessings and “see what God hath done.” From our awareness of God’s goodness to us comes the radiant joy of the Christian life.

For some Christians, gratitude is a burdensome obligation. They are like the tiny trick-or-treater who was given some goodies and started to leave a house. He stopped before getting out of earshot of his benefactors to shout, “Oh, I almost forgot—Mama told me to say, ‘Thank you!’” Too often we are thankful more from obligation than from our hearts.

God’s grace and mercy, evident in creation, redemption, and preservation, thus becomes the grounds and motive of the responsive and responsible service of showing forth “the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). A wise man once said, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

## CONCLUSION

True worship was no automatic experience for Israel, nor is it for the Christian today. It requires involvement, a willingness to know the truth, and the courage to put that truth into action. William Temple has well said:

To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God,  
to feed the mind with the truth of God,  
to purge the imagination by the beauty of God,  
to open the heart to the love of God,  
to devote the will to the purpose of God.<sup>1</sup>

### Endnote

<sup>1</sup>William Temple, *The Hope of a New World*, quoted in James Douglas, ed., *Handbook of Preaching Resources from English Literature* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1962), 248.