

New Testament Christianity - Part 2

by Zac Poonen

New Testament worship involves worship in the spirit, giving God what is most precious in our lives, and it is a way of life, not just a ritual or a feeling.

Duration: 35:20

Scripture: John 4:23

Topics: "True Worship", "Christian Perfection"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true worship in spirit and truth, contrasting the worship of body and soul with worship in the spirit. It highlights the need to cleanse oneself from defilement and perfect holiness in the fear of God, urging believers to press on to perfection and not settle for a mediocre Christian life. The speaker challenges listeners to take their faith seriously, to worship God wholeheartedly, and to live a life dedicated to God's glory.

Transcript

You remember? Yes. Have you studied the word? Worship. Where does it occur in the New Testament to understand the New Testament worship? Why do I say that? I'll show you a verse, John chapter 4. You know, I've always compared John chapter 3 and John chapter 4. In John chapter 3, Jesus spoke to whom? Do you know? All you Bible scholars, you don't know the answer, do you? Nicodemus.

Nicodemus. He was a bishop, what today we call a bishop. In John chapter 4, he spoke to a Samaritan woman who had been divorced five times and was now sleeping around with another man.

Can you see the contrast for a holy bishop? There was a five times divorce, I don't know if there are any people like that. Five times divorce and now sleeping around with another man, this is almost the worst type of sinner as a bishop. In one, there are two subjects spoken of in these chapters.

Two subjects. One is being born again and the other is worship. Now you tell me, if you were there, to whom would you speak about being born again? To the bishop or to this five times divorced Samaritan woman? I say definitely that five times divorced woman needs to get about.

And to whom will you speak about worship? To the bishop. But Jesus is not like us. Our human way of thinking is so perverted and wrong.

Jesus speaks to the bishop saying you must be born again. A woman of bishop's grace will need to be born again, I tell you that. And to the sinful Samaritan woman he speaks about his profound subject of worship.

I like that. Jesus is not like religious preachers. He's so different.

Because he saw a heart in that woman who had made a mess of her life. Everybody looked down upon her. Divorced, living wrong.

Jesus saw inside that a heart that was sorry for the way she had lived. And wanted to change. Now, do you know why Jesus mattered? Matter? Well, you know what time it was? Midday.

Do you know the villages in India? When do people go to the well to get water? Early morning. Because they need water for the whole day. There's no running water in India, in the villages.

Why did this woman come at 12 noon? I tell you. Use your imagination. I always tell people, you use your imagination for so many filthy things in your uncomfortable place.

Why not use it for some good things? I use my imagination and I say, why did this woman come at 12 noon? Because when she used to come in the morning, all the other women would gang up against her and make fun of her and say, you wretched prostitute and all that stuff. She said, let me go and there's nobody there. At noon, nobody would be there.

And the Holy Spirit led Jesus to be there. He was walking through some area and he told his disciples, you go to the restaurant and have some food. I'm waiting here.

And he was waiting to help this poor sinful woman. And he tells this woman, you know, this woman said, where should we worship? What is the right time to worship? Here on this mountain or in Jerusalem? And Jesus said, woman, John 4, 21. It is not here or there that you are going to worship.

True worship is worship in the Spirit. John 4, 22. Sorry, 23.

An hour is coming. Read carefully and slowly. An hour is coming when the true worshippers, true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth.

It has not yet come. It is coming. That means up until that time, nobody on earth had worshipped the Father in Spirit.

Man is three parts, body, soul and spirit. You read that in 1 Thessalonians 5, 23. That God is a Trinity, three persons.

Man is a Trinity in terms of three parts of himself, spirit, soul and body. So when it says here worship in Spirit, then what Jesus was saying, till now people only worship in body and soul. He did not worship in spirit.

What is it to worship in body? Use our words, use our tongue, clap, raise your hands, shout, all that is good. I do it. They did it in the Old Testament.

And worship in the soul. What is worship in the soul? Worship in the soul is with our mind. It means I think about what I am saying, majesty, worship is majesty.

And emotions. You know, He took my sins and my sorrows. He made them His very own.

He had no tears for His own griefs, but sweat drops of blood for mine. And I feel like crying. Like he was saying, it is emotion.

Worship in body and soul. The Old Testament was full of it. They would dance, they would jump, they would blow trumpets and instruments and all that.

But worship in the spirit, nobody even knew what it was. All worship until that point was worship in body and soul. You are going to learn something today.

But Jesus said, the hour is now coming when the true worshippers, the true worshippers, that means there are some false worshippers also, who don't understand what worship is. True worshippers would worship God in spirit. That means they would go through to the spirit.

You know, in the Old Testament tabernacle, if you have seen pictures of the tabernacle, it had three parts. One was the, like think of a compound with a building inside. That's how the tabernacle was.

A big compound, curtained up, and a building inside. And the building was divided into two parts with a big curtain inside. The compound was called the outer court, symbolizing our body.

Inside the building were two hidden parts, like soul and spirit, hidden inside his body. The tabernacle was a picture of man. And if you went inside the tabernacle, you could not go into the most holy place.

It was a veil, thick veil that nobody in the Old Testament knew. You know, I used to go once a year and nobody was allowed to go. If you went inside, you'd be killed.

God went there. God did not dwell in the outer court or holy place. He dwelt in the outer court.

And God was trying to, everything in the Old Testament is a picture. And He was saying, I cannot dwell in your spirit. Because there's something wrong there.

It's a thick veil. When Jesus died, what happened to that veil? It was torn. Saying, now God can dwell in your spirit.

Now you can worship in the spirit. Till now you could worship only in the body and soul. There's a curtain there.

You cannot worship in the spirit. When Jesus died, the veil was rent. Now you can worship in the spirit.

That's why, Jesus, the hour is coming when you will worship in the spirit. Do you see how beautiful the Bible is? I'm just excited when I study the Bible. Everything fits into place.

It's like a jigsaw puzzle. It looks so beautiful when these missing parts are all put there. It's like that.

Now I can worship in the spirit because the veil has been rent. Jesus has opened the way. But in spite of that, most Christians do not know.

What it is to go inside the veil and worship in the spirit. Because they're not serious. They're not serious students of the Bible.

It's like some of these third-rate medical colleges in India, where you get it not by your merit, but by paying some money, because your father is rich. And all those doctors who don't know anything about medicine come out of those medical colleges with degrees. The only thing they do is help reduce the population of India by their treatment of people and so on.

This is the condition of so many preachers and Christians. They don't know. But a good doctor coming from a good medical college is a serious student of anatomy and physiology and all the books.

He's a serious student. If you're a real serious Christian, you'll study the Bible. Otherwise, you'd be like these doctors who come out of these third-rate medical colleges.

Many Christians are like that. They're not serious students of the Bible. They don't know.

Many things I say, hey, was it like that? I say, it was written in the Bible all along. I'm not telling you something from some other revelation. It's there.

I often tell people, I like to tell people, if you listen to me, you'll get a new Bible. It's the same old Bible, but you suddenly discover things you never saw before. Because all I ask you, all I do is I tell you to read it, okay? That's all.

The true worshippers will worship in spirit, not just in body and soul, not just with emotion and nice words and excitement and clapping and shouting. No, there'll be more than that in spirit. And the Father seeks for such worshippers.

I remember when I read that. You know, I meditate on scripture. I don't just read it.

The Bible says you must meditate on scripture. So I would think, I don't mind spending five minutes on a verse, ten minutes on a verse, and then the next day also I meditate on the same verse. And I think of God looking down from heaven, my Father.

And he's seeking, I'm telling you, he's seeking for true worshippers on this earth. True worshippers are those who worship in spirit. And he sees the world full of people worshipping in body and soul, all over, even in Christian churches, and singing a few songs and calling it worship.

He's looking for true worshippers who will worship in spirit and he doesn't find much. I say, Lord, make me one of them who will worship in spirit, because you're looking for them. The Father is seeking for true worshippers.

Does that produce a passion in your heart? It doesn't matter. I say, Lord, if you're seeking for true worshippers, I want to be one of them. Not just on Sundays or Fridays.

Every day of my life, I want to be a worshipper. In spirit. And then it says in verse 24, God is a spirit.

Those who worship him must worship in spirit. So, what is spiritual worship? Turn with me now to Romans 12. Verse 1. Romans 12, I urge you, brethren, with mercies of God, present your body a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.

This is your spiritual worship. This is your worship in the spirit, where from the innermost being, I allow God to control my mind, my hands, my eyes, my ears, and my whole being becomes an object of worship to God. Can you think of a man in the Old Testament who offered something very precious to him on an

altar? Abraham.

Who was that? Abraham, right. What did he offer on the altar? Isaac. The most precious thing to him was Isaac.

Even if God had said, kill Sarah, it would not have been as... Isaac. You know, there are a lot of people who love their children more than they love their wives. That's the scripture, by the way.

The Bible says most love your wife, like Christ loved the church. But most... I found most fathers in India love their children more than they love their wives. It's very unfortunate.

Even Christians who know the scriptures. You know, it's wrong. Love your children, but next to your wife.

But Abraham didn't have that right. And even so, Isaac was the darling of his heart. And God saw this.

Isaac had become an idol for Abraham. God said, kill him. He's taking the place I should have in your life, Abraham.

Anything that takes the place of God in your life, maybe your job, maybe your money, maybe your bank account, maybe your house, maybe your car, God said, sacrifice it. And Abraham said, sure. I'll do it.

And he took his servants to Mount Moriah. And I want you to turn to this verse in Genesis 22. Read it.

Genesis 22. On the third day, verse 4, he saw the place from a distance where Mount Moriah. You know, he had taken Isaac, verse 3, and the wood for the burnt offering and everything.

See what Abraham told the young man in verse 5. Abraham said to the young man, you stay here with the donkey. I and my son will go on top of this mountain. And what are we going to do there? We're going to worship.

Aha. So what does worship mean? Worship means to give to God that which is most precious in your life. In this case, it was Isaac.

In your case, I don't know what it is. But offer it to God and say, God, you are more precious to me than this. That is worship.

If you can take all the valuable things in your life and put it on the altar and say, Lord, this means nothing to me. You are more precious to me than all the rest of rubbish. That is worship.

I got rid of my attachment to possessions and things and all many, many years ago. But everything, every time something else becomes more precious. Sometimes my ministry can become precious and God says, your ministry is your idol.

Put it on the altar. I said, sure. Your ministry is not going to be my idol.

I sometimes say, don't even take it on my wife's if you like. I won't give a preaching. That's fine.

I'm simply a worshipper. Nobody can stop me from worshipping. I want to spend all eternity worshipping God.

I'm not going to spend eternity preaching or praying. I'm going to be a worshipper of God. I want to do that never in my life will anyone take the place that God should have in my life.

I'm going to be a worshipper. And it's very, very important because Jesus told the devil, you shall worship and then you shall serve. Matthew 4.10. Very important.

You cannot serve without worshipping. And I believe a lot of people, their service for God is pretty useless because they don't worship first. So, it's a very wonderful thing to be able to be a worshipper where God is everything to you.

And you'll find that life becomes much more relaxed when God is everything. Some earthly thing becomes very precious to you. What happens is if that earthly thing could be stolen or taken away or lost, you lose your joy.

I remember once I was traveling in a bus in Chennai three years ago and I was driving and I got down from the bus and I found my wallet was missing. Boy, I was proud of us. But that guy did such a neat job that he bought it.

I didn't feel a thing. I said, that guy really deserved it because he did such a neat job of taking the wallet out of my pocket. But, I did not lose my joy because my joy was not inside my wallet.

My joy was in my heart. So that is the first thing. I realized, thank God, my joy was not in my wallet.

Some people, their joy is in their wallet, I tell you. If it's not in their wallet, it's in their bank account. You must never put your joy in your bank account.

Keep your money there, that's okay. Keep your joy in your heart. Don't put your joy in anything earthly, not in your car or in your house.

I said, probably not. Nobody has ever prayed for this big pocket in his whole life. At least not me, the first person to pray that God be merciful enough.

So, he did a good thing by picking my pocket. He bought somebody's Christmas. Make sure your joy is in God, not in anything on this earth.

It's very important. My joy is in my heart. Nothing on earth is important to me.

And don't just feel like that right now when you hear a message. Say, Lord, this is going to be my way of life from now on. From now on, my way of life is God is most important.

And do you think you'll be a loser when you put that? I tell you, my life has been so restful. I sleep peacefully at night, I don't have any worries, no anxieties. It's not that I don't have any problems.

Jesus had problems, and I have problems too. But they don't worry me. It's just that.

What does it matter? If something doesn't work out the way I expect it, forget it. Nothing on earth is important to me. I get it, I get it, but I don't get it all the time.

Well, see, so many people to get a visa to a country, it's almost like they're God. They're so desperate that they don't get it. And they get so excited when they get it.

That has become their God. And that ruins their Christianity. A job becomes their God, a house becomes their God, something or the other.

Many Christians are not worshippers. They're worshipping something else, right? You can look down on those non-Christians, oh, they worship gods of idols of wood and stone. What about you? Are you worshipping something not a visible idol of wood and stone, but something else which is invisible, but which is an idol? I tell you, Christians, there are so many idols in their heart, more idols than many non-Christians.

It's true. But they don't realize it. In fact, that visible idol is less dangerous because you see it.

These invisible idols, everybody worships the invisible idol. Make sure it's not true in your life. God, the Father of all, Jesus Christ, you're the only one I worship.

My body is yours, my mind is yours, and everything. And I would encourage you to get to and read the scriptures, you know, these things that you've seen today, for example. I'm sure you've seen many things which you never knew before.

But you've read the Bible for many years. How is it you never saw it? Because you don't really care for it. It's not a passion to find out what... You study your professional books more seriously than you read the Bible.

Because that means something to you. You've got to pass an examination, you've got to get a degree. That means so much.

The Bible, right? It means my conscience. We must be more serious Christians. At least in this church, CFC, I hope we have some serious Christians who will read the scriptures more carefully and say, I'm not worried about it, I don't have a responsibility for other churches.

But, you know, like a father. As a father, I'm responsible for my children. I'm not responsible for my neighbor's children.

I love them. If they are in some trouble, I can help them, but I'm not responsible for them. I don't have to feed all the children in India on the streets and make sure my children are fed.

That's also true for you. So in the same way, spiritually, I have some children in our churches. And I want them to take Christianity seriously.

All the other Christians, I love them, but I don't have a responsibility for them. To me, they are like the other children, they are not my children. God bless them.

So, I say, in our CFC churches, we must have people who take the Bible very seriously, who start studying it seriously and want to obey it and do as it says. I hope all of you in this church will do that. It will make a tremendous difference.

Not to study it so that you can get up and say something clever at a meeting. That is worship of yourself. Don't study it to say something clever at a meeting.

Don't worship yourself. Say, Lord, I want to study the Bible to obey what you have written there. That's why we should study the Bible, not to prepare sermons.

Those who study the Bible to prepare sermons are worshippers of themselves. When you study the Bible in order to obey God, Lord, what is it that you want me to do? Study the Bible like that and let it influence your life. Let's look at another passage of scripture.

What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits towards me? That's what we've been thinking of. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians and chapter 7. 2 Corinthians 7. Verse 1. Since we have these wonderful promises, what shall we do? What shall I render to the Lord when He's made these wonderful promises? Let's look at that. Chapter 6, verse 16.

Middle of that verse. I will dwell in them, God says. I will walk among them.

I'll be their God. They shall be my people. Verse 18.

I'll be a father to them and they shall be my sons and daughters, says Almighty God. Almighty God saying to ordinary creatures, I'll be your father. Then He says, since we have such wonderful promises, since God has been so good to us, what shall we render to the Lord in return for this tremendous goodness that He's shown to us with these fantastic promises? He says, here's what you should do.

Cleanse yourself from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. This is what you, Hezekiah did not make return for the benefit of God. If you want to make return for the benefit of your God, here's what you should do.

Cleanse yourself. Now there's a cleansing that God does that is from my past sins. I cannot cleanse myself from my past sins.

You know how in our country people roll on the ground and go on pilgrimages all to cleanse their past sins because that's my past. There's no other way. He died for me and He took away my sins.

But that is the past. But this nature of mine, that cannot be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. You know that? That, I have to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to put it to death.

So, I must cleanse myself. It says here, not ask God to cleanse me. Let us cleanse ourselves.

My past sins, I have to say, Lord, I can't cleanse myself. But this nature of mine, let me cleanse myself from this filthiness of the flesh, which is the outward sins, and of spirit, which is the inner sins and make my holiness perfect in reverence for God. The fear of God, tremendous reverence for Almighty God.

That's how we perfect holiness. I've preached on perfecting holiness for many years now. I get it from the Bible.

If your children go to school, I ask this question sometimes to people. Supposing in a mathematics examination, pass marks is, what is pass marks now, 35 or 40? 40 is pass marks. One child got 40%.

Another child got 99%. Who will come home happier? The one who got 40% or the one who got 99%? The one who got 40%. He says, Mummy, I passed.

I didn't fail. The 99% says, Oh, Mummy, I lost. Isn't that amazing? The one who got 99% is sad.

And the one who got 40% is so happy. It's really true. Because the one who got 99% is pressing on to perfection.

These are two types of Christians. 40% is, I'm saved. I'm going to heaven.

My seat is reserved. I got my visa. I'm going to heaven.

Everything's okay. There are other Christians who say, Lord, I slipped up there. I had one bad thought.

I spoke a word which I should not have spoken. I want to cleanse myself. Which category are you? Are you the 40% or the 90% or the 99%? I want to be in that.

This perfecting holiness. It's not some word I invented. It is there in the Bible.

Perfecting holiness if you are God. Do you know that hardly any church preaches about it? In our CFC Bangalore quote, we have a verse written, let us press on to perfection. It's from Hebrews 6 verse 1. Some people accuse us, saying, hey, you guys think you're perfect.

I say, no, look at what's written in that verse. You're pressing on to perfection. That means we haven't reached it.

I say, it's you guys who don't talk about perfection. You're the guys who think you're perfect. We talk about it.

We haven't reached it. We are pressing on to perfection. Let us perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Is there a verse like that in your Bible? Have you ever bothered to obey it? Or you're jumping for joy because you're 40%? I'm not. I want to perfect holiness in the fear of God. I don't want to just get a seat in heaven.

What do you want the Lord to say to you? Well done, good and faithful servant. Or do you want the Lord to say, oh, you made it, did you? Or do you want the Lord to say to you, you never thought you'd make it, did you? I don't want the Lord to say to me, I never thought I'd make it, but I made it. I want the Lord to say, well done, good and faithful servant, and to enjoy the Lord.

Because after, listen to this. Sadhu Sundar Singh used to say this. Sadhu Sundar Singh was the greatest saint that India has ever seen.

Godly man. He used to be my hero. I've got a picture of him in my room.

Really godly man. A man who was so utterly devoted. And he said this, you know like we tell people, after you die, you won't get a chance to receive Christ.

Sadhu Sundar Singh used to say, after you die, you will not get a chance to take up the cross and follow Jesus. That's what it promises. One of them 40 percent, the other is 99 percent.

After you die, you will receive Christ. You will not get a chance to take up the cross and follow Jesus. If you want to do that, better do it now.

That's what I think of. I say, Lord, once I die, I'm not afraid of going to hell. That's finished.

That part is over. I've gone long ago in my past 40 percent. I'm now aiming for 100.

I haven't got there, but I'm aiming for it. I will not get a chance to take up the cross and show my love for Jesus once I get to heaven. Supposing, for example, just think of it.

Supposing I spend all my life living selfishly just for myself. I'm happy with my 40 percent. I'm going to heaven.

When I die, my sins are forgiven. I'm happy with 40 percent, 40 percent. I've passed, I've passed.

I live for myself. I live for making money. I live for the honor of God.

I look back over my life. God shows me the videotape of my earthly life. I see how I lived for myself.

I sought my own. Careless about sin. I will have such sorrow when I stand before the Lord.

I'll have such regret. You know what I say? Lord, can you give me one more chance to live on the earth and show my love for you? Don't say sorry. You've got only one chance to live on the earth.

You'll never get another chance to show your love for Jesus or to take up the cross. My dear brothers and sisters, this is the only life you'll get to show your love for Jesus Christ. Don't lose the opportunity.

If you miss it, you've missed it. Not only for time, you've missed it for eternity. I think of that many times.

That's why I say, Lord, give me some more years to show my love for you. To show that you mean more to me than anything on this earth. That's for you.

God has opened your heart. Take seriously what you have heard. Don't let the birds of the air, the demons come and take it all away from your mind, drive it south.

Say, Lord, I want to remember this every day and live the life of your word. Tell me, Father, in South East India, to be wise in the decisions I make. Namaste.

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