Being the product of a Creator, it is only natural that we are worshipful beings. Even those who have no knowledge of the one true and living God will work out something to worship, even if it is their ancestors or the creation of their own imagination. We cannot but worship something, which in turn proves that we are the product of Something that is beyond this material world. We have the great advantage today that we have revelation from our Creator as to how He would seek to be worshiped. It is this guide, the Bible, that we use the "instruction manual" to keep our worship focused and under His control. But this has not always been the case throughout history and around world. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on all of us to seek out our Creator, and then seek out how He seeks to be worshiped.

♦ Venturing Into Theatrics ♦

Almost everyone has read about a particular spectacle of religious showmanship that has been circulated throughout the world. It seems that there was this bazaar religious reality show sometime in the past where there were several preachers jumping up and down around an altar. It was a very intriguing spectacle. If some witnessed this, they would think that these folks were very sincere in their worship of God. But before we cast any judgments on these worshipers, it might be good to take another look at the occasion of this ordeal

The "worshipers" who were involved in this ordeal started to jump up and down like a troop of drunken monkeys on steroids. This carried on for almost an entire day. The people were screaming at the top of their voices, which screaming eventually made all of them so hoarse that they could no longer speak.

They then resorted to cutting themselves with knives in order to excite an entranced audience of onlookers to join in with their fiasco.

The preachers were so intense in their outlandish theatrics that, after cutting themselves, blood gushed from their severed veins and was strewn over the audience, many of whom were likewise stirred into an hypnotic frenzy of uncontrollable hysteria. It was a display of religious nonsense to the extreme. Some in the audience were so uncontrollably moved that they fell to the ground, rolling in every contorted way possible. Some in the audience were likewise crying out at the top of their voices. Others just fell down as stunned mummies because of what they saw in the behavior of the preachers who were dancing on the stage around the altar. Those who had fallen down just laid there emotionally paralyzed in the exhaustion of a semiconscious stupor.

We are sure you did not miss this hysterical display of reality religiosity that has gone viral throughout the world through the media of the Bible. It was a typical demonstration of religious sensationalism that is characteristic with many religious groups today.

A. The Mocking Preacher

If you read carefully about this theatrical picture of a religious extravaganza in **1 Kings 18:17-40**—maybe somewhat embellished by our imagination of the

account—you will notice that there was this one preacher who was standing off to the side by himself from the enraptured chaotic crowd of misguided preachers. He was there, calmly



A Show Of Theatrical Worship.

watching the outrageous behavior of the entire spectacle. He simply remained unmoved by all the horrific experiential display of preachers out of control of themselves who were emotionality in a fit of hysteria.

After observing this psychotic and misguided religiosity for some time, you would not believe what he did. The prophet of God, Elijah, began to mock the theatrical preachers. He mocked them by chiding that they should appeal more intensely to their god, which god they had created after their own misguided imagination: "Cry aloud," he mockingly chided them, "for he is a god. Either he is meditating, or he is busy, or maybe he is on some journey. Perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened" (1 Kings 18:27).

People who are ignorant of the God of the Bible will create a god in their minds that they believe seeks hysterical and out-of-control worship. People worship according to the god they imagine in their minds.

- T or F: It is not right to mock the hysterical display of misguided worship, and those who lead in such disorderly events.
- T or F: Since God is a God of order, then we would correctly assume that any worship of Him should be orderly.

B. The Real Thing

It is interesting that this event has been for years circulated throughout the world in the Bible. Unfortunately, this extravaganza of misguided worship is seldom read by those who seek to lose themselves in their own vain worship (See Mark 7:1-9). We live in a religious world today where such scenes, as was played out in 1 Kings 18, are broadcast around the world on religious television. One can actually bring such religious confusion into one's own home by turning to those religious channels that broadcast such "theatrical religion."

1 Kings 18 is an ancient record that reveals how long emotionally out-of-control worship has been with us throughout the centuries. As then, so also today, theatrical worship is an obsession of misguided religionists who believe that their emotional release from their struggles in life is a Sunday morning outburst of hysteria. But this is an obsessive behavior wherein some seek to move into self-sanctifying worship. **This is the belief that if one performs well on Sunday,**

sin is forgiven, and then, one can go on his or her way feeling that sin has been purged from one's soul.

Such people often justify this worship behavior by plagiarizing the word "worship" in the Bible. consider their out-of-control assemblies to be worship, knowing that many cults do the same. In their efforts to validate their hysterical "worship" they have

There Is No Such Thing In Christianity As Acceptable Meritorious Worship For Sin.

created a god in their minds they believe accepts their "worshipful" extravaganza. They have imagined this god in their minds to sit and witness their obnoxious theatrical performances, listening to their ear-splitting cries. But is this the God who would say to His people, "The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him" (Habakkuk 2:20).

If we are guilty of creating this idol god whom we would self-righteously worship, and whom we suppose would accept as worship theatrics, then we have deceived ourselves as those performers in 1 Kings 18. Some folks sometimes produce the most exotic and spiritually toxic assemblies by which they reassure themselves that such experiential events must exist every Sunday morning. They thus come together—as Elijah mocked them-in order to "awaken their idol god from his sleep," or call him back into their lives from a "journey" on which he may have gone. Their assemblies, however, qualify as the meeting of a cult, regardless of how many times they cry out, "Jesus, Jesus."

As with the hysterical performance on Mount Carmel, some now believe that the more noise they can make, the more they can amplify in an assembly a rabid stirring of the attendees into a frenzy. In this way, they often dupe themselves into believing that their hysterical Sunday extravaganza will call their idol god up from the quietness of his sleep in order to give attention to their chaotic assembly. This was what the Baal prophets on Mount Carmel of Elijah's day believed, and subsequently behaved accordingly

when Elijah challenged them to an altar contest.

So some today also combine the deafening noise of a rock concert, plus the preacher's rhythmical cheerleading cries. They then suppose that they have awakened their god out of his sleep in order to administer a spiritual placebo to 4 themselves that will carry them through until the next Sunday extravaganza. It will be then

Worship Can Be **Emotional Without** Being Hysterical.

that they will again proceed through the same theatrical ritual of jumping up and down around a vainly offered sacrifice, while at the same time, severing their emotional veins with unspiritual knives. The Baal prophets were masters at producing an emotional frenzy among themselves and the people.

If we create in our minds a god after our own out-ofcontrol emotional behavior, then we will behave in our worship according to what we believe this god desires.

- Who was the prophet of God who mocked the preachers who 3. led an emotional extravaganza on Mt. Carmel? (A) Moses, (B) Elijah, (C) Joshua, (D) David
- T or F: Since God has no ears, we can assume that noise does not appeal to Him.

C. A True Prophet Of God

So some might think that we are being somewhat over critical of the Baal prophets in this matter. Some may think that we are mocking when we chide these theatrical preachers with the words of Elijah, "Cry aloud, for you suppose he is a god! Maybe your god is asleep! Maybe he is on a journey!" (1 Kg 18:27). You are exactly right. That is preciously what Elijah did. He mocked these theatrical religious leaders by chiding their uncontrolled performance before the people. He was not mocking emotional worship. He was mocking their misguided behavior in reference to a god they had created after their own imagination.

We stand with Elijah, the prophet of God, the preacher who mocked the 450 Baal preachers in 1 Kings 18 who had lost their dignity before an audiup the dead god they had cre-

ence of people whom they had led into the captivity of uncontrolled worship theatrics. These prophets had sacrificed the God of Elijah for an experience of religious theatrics by which they thought they could conjure

False Gods Bow To The Cries Of God Creators.

ated in their own minds. They presumed that their emotional hysteria on the stage of the altar would lead the people to believe in the nonsense of their misguided religiosity that was sterile of any knowledge of the one true and living God.

The biblical record of this theatrical spectacle proves that nothing has changed among some religionists since the day Elijah mocked the Baal prophets on Mount Carmel almost three thousand years ago. There are still today those who would woo us into thinking that they speak the truth simply because they can hysterically perform worship theatrics before a crowd of people. But we will not be deceived. We will not become a cult of hysterical religionists.

Those preachers who would not stand with Elijah and mock hysterical preachers who seek to emotionally deceive the people, are themselves condoning such misguided religiosity.

T or F: One behaves according to what he or she believes God to be.
T or F: Our knowledge of God can be defined only by what we read in the Bible.

D. Heed The Warnings

The word of God is filled with warnings to which we should give earnest heed, especially in understanding

the God we seek to worship. Repeating these warnings on a regular basis would be good for us in these times when there are so many theatrical religions throughout the world that have led millions into a world of misguided worship:



We Seek To Worship The One True God.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching. But to suit their own itching ears, they will surround themselves with teachers who will agree with their own [theatrical] desires. And they will turn away their ears from the truth and will be turned to fables (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

The presence of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all deceiving power and signs and wonders, and with all deception of wickedness among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:9,10).

If we behave in our assemblies as a cult of theatrical worshipers, then we are a cult of emotionalists.

7. T or F: Because the Holy Spirit warned of those who would turn away from true worship, we must assume that there are those today who have so turned.

◆ Restoring The Spirit Of True Worship ◆

We live in a world of misguided religionists who have created "Mount Carmel" assemblies on Sunday morning throughout the world. But we conclude that something is wrong with this emotionally chaotic worship when we reason that in such worship assemblies people are often seeking to justify themselves before God through their meritorious performance of worship activities. This has driven us to always consider our own worship lest we likewise turn away from the true worship that the true God of heaven desires. We are always driven by the words of the One—the Son of God—who came to earth from the very presence of the One we worship: "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24).

In order to restore this true worship that is according to the word of God, we sometimes must be somewhat negative in our search and discovery. This principle of discovery is certainly needed in our investigation of how we worship God. Because worship must come from within our hearts, and not be pumped in from outside stimulus, we must always check ourselves on this matter. Therefore, it is not negative to be sin-

cere about discovering how God is worshipped.

A. Legal Worship

In recognition of the fact that we who have obeyed

the gospel, cannot afterward live a sinless life, some however, have gone to the extreme. They have gone in the way of the Jews of Jesus' day. They have invented a ritualistic Sunday of Worship Is Never "worship" laws to be obeyed in Defined As A order to atone for one's sins of **Meritorious System** Of Atonement the past week. These sins were For Sins. supposedly committed between the "closing prayer" last Sunday morning and the "opening prayer" the following Sunday. Once the worship ceremonies were completed, then some believe that they have a saved—restored—relationship with God. Our Sunday ceremonial laws of identity, therefore, can supposedly be performed within a window

This belief and behavior has given rise to the concept of "the hour of worship," which concept is nowhere found in the New Testament. The belief, nevertheless, presents a problem, especially in view of the fact that Jesus said that His people would worship **anytime** and **anywhere** (See John 4:21-24).

of time on Sunday morning in order to legally restore our relationship with God. This is a legal definition of

worship.

If we go deeper into this concept of worship, some surprising conclusions are discovered. After successfully performing the required ceremonies during the "hour of worship," or exhausting oneself in an experiential euphoria of entertaining "worship," the attending adherent is supposedly released from a sense of guilt over sins that were committed throughout the past week—at least one goes away from such an assembly feeling better.

In order to validate the existence of this supposed "worship atonement" through "worshipful" performances, the "hour of worship" is opened with an "opening prayer" and concluded with a "closing prayer." The performance of the ceremonies between the two

prayers—it is believed—becomes an "offering" of atonement for all sins committed outside the "worship hour." After the "closing prayer," therefore, the "faithful" worshiper, if he or she has specifically and meritoriously performed the "acts of worship," or exhausted oneself in a chaotic euphoric experience, can supposedly walk away from the assembly with a reassuring sense of

Phrases Not In Bible. "Worship Hour" "Worship Services" "Opening Prayer" "Closing Prayer" "Hour Of Worship" "Worship Laws" "Acts Of Worship" "Place Of Worship" "Santuary Of Worship"

the church. Subsequently, after such a performance, some have convinced themselves with a false sense of "faithfulness" because they have performed the "worship" ceremonies on Sunday morning. In other words, there is no need for grace between the opening and closing prayers on Sunday morning simply because supposed "laws of atonement" have been performed by which one is self-justified in obedience to the supposed "laws of worship." We resort to grace only after the closing prayer. We do so because we have led ourselves to believe that the "faithful" performance of our ceremonies of law between the opening and closing prayers have atoned for all our sins outside the "hour of worship."

having restored his or her righteousness, and thus relationship with God. By doing such, it is assumed that one has returned to being a faithful member of

- T or F: Our acts of worship, when performed correctly, will sanctify 8. us of sin.
- 9. T or F: It is a deception to believe that worship is a meritorious performance by which one can atone for his or her sins.

B. Grace Identity Of Worship

In view of the preceding belief and behavior in reference to establishing a legal identity of the worship of the church, and the faithful obedience thereof, we have inadvertently established a legal identity of the church that is based on law, not grace. By focusing on the merit of our worship performances, we are forced to move grace aside during the performance of law within the "hour of worship." Most people realize this, but they do not know how to deliver themselves from such a state of formalized worship.

The problem with legalized worship is that we cannot substitute some meritorious system of "worship laws" as atonement for our sins, even if we define the performed acts to be "worship." Deep inside we know this. And because we truly know that we cannot perform our way into being righteous before God through worship performances, we seek to find a way out of empty worship.

By being obedient to a catechism of worship ceremonies, we might presumptuously declare that we have been made righteous in our worship obedience, and thus justified before God because of our faithful worship attendance. But worship can never be considered a meritorious behavioral performance for the atonement of our sins. To think so is only a deception brought on by a spirit of self-righteousness.

If we feel righteous after the performance of our worship ceremonies, or the exhilaration that may

come from a well-performed concert, then we might lean to-ward being self-righteous because of what we performed or experienced during the "hour of worship." But to "feel"

One Worships
Because He Is
Righteous, Not
In Order To
Become Righteous.

such is to marginalize the grace of God and ignore the righteousness of God that comes to us through the gospel of the cross.

Such self-righteousness is contrary to the very nature of the people of God as revealed in the New Testament (Compare Romans 10:1-3). Such is contrary to the faith of Jesus whereby He took Himself to the cross for us. His gospel action at the cross was a result of His faith (See Galatians 2:16). We would never, therefore, substitute the expression of our faith in worship as a substitute for His faith to make us righteous through the cross.

Any sense of self-righteousness because of the performance of our faith is an attack against the righteousness that comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- 10. T or F: We are made righteous before God by the cross, not by an attempt to worship ourselves into being righteous by keeping certain acts of worship.
- 11. T or F: Obediently keeping worship ceremonies in order to meritoriously boast of our righteousness before God marginalizes the grace of God through the cross.

♦ Worship A Matter Of Faith ♦

In order to restore true worship, it is absolutely necessary to believe in a God who can created that which we see and experience out of that which did not formerly exist. Believing in this God is necessary lest we resort to creating an impotent god in our minds whom we have no desire to worship. It is imperative, therefore, the those who worship must firmly believe the following statement of the Holy Spirit:

By faith we understand that the universe was formed by the word of God, so that the things that are seen were not made of things that are visible (Hebrews 11:3).

The atheist and Christian are in a confrontation of faiths concerning the origin of all things. This

confrontation affects our worship of God. Think about this for a moment. Both the atheist and the Christian believe in a beginning, whether launched by an imaginary Big Bang, or the quiet whispered word of a S

the quiet whispered word of a Supreme Being who is not composed of that which He created. With either position concerning origins, faith is involved. And it is our faith that either creates or destroys worship.

A. Matters Of Faith

Neither the atheist nor the Christian was there when it all began. And because neither was there in the beginning, then each must depend on faith in Whom or what started that which now exists. Both fervently analyze extracted bones from the earth, or dig up rocks, in order to seek some answer to the beginning or origin of all things. Regardless of the world view of either the atheist or Christian, each promotes a faith as to how all things began because neither was there when it all began. Fortunately, the Christian can dig up from what He believes is direct creation from the Creator of all rocks. He believes that there is a God who can create, not simply evolve us from rocks to living beings.

Since both the atheist and Christian were not present when all things came into existence in the beginning, then both must depend on faith in reference to beginnings. But the faith of the Christian inspires worship, not imagination of the "god" of evolution.

In order to answer the question concerning the present existence of life on this planet, the atheist is restricted to **the theory of evolution**. Subsequently, the atheist must labor zealously in order to convince others that evolution is actually a scientific fact of both physiological and biological beginnings. He seeks to convince us that all the physical and biological world in which we now exist is the result of a long process of psychological and biological evolution. No God needed. For this reason, the worship of those who believe that humanity is the product of a biological process of evolution are actually worshiping—if indeed they do worship—a god they have created after their own faith in evolution. They are not worshiping the God of creation that is revealed in the Bible.

The Christian worships according to a faith in the power of an eternal Creator, who, sometime in the past, spoke the material world and life into existence. He too is zealous to convince everyone that his or her faith concerning the origin of all things must be accepted. He or she is zealous to convince others of faith in the God of creation because his or her faith, too, is based on geological, biological, plus Bible "facts" concerning past events. Though all the evidence "assumes" the existence of this God in which

he or she believes, the Christian must still have faith. As the atheist, the Christian too was not there when all that now exists came into existence.

Christians must still walk by faith, regardless of their conclusions that all evidence we have in the present points to a Creator as the origin of all things. The theistic evolutionists, on the other hand, worship an impotent god who has no creative powers.

- 12. T or F: Belief in the process of evolution is not a matter of faith, but a matter of science.
- 13. T or F: Because we were not there when all things came into existence, means that both those who believe in creation and those who believe in evolution must depend on faith.

B. Debate Over Beginnings

So here we are in a confrontational debate where there is a mutual rejection of one another's faith. In reference to beginnings, the atheist rejects the answer of a Creator, and the Christian rejects the answer of materialistic evolutionist. It is a passionate standoff between dedicated "theologians" or "philosophers" who reject the faith of one another because each contends that his faith is the answer for the existence of that which now exists.

Unfortunately, some on both sides of the debate seem to forget that both beliefs concerning origins is a matter of faith, for neither atheist nor believer was there when it all happened. Each faith concerning origins, therefore, depends on deductive reasoning from what we now presently observe or experience. Our faith prejudices us concerning our investigation of that which now exists.

A rock that is picked up from the earth may be judged to be billions of years old by the atheist, but only thousands of years old by the creationist. The judgment of both concerning the age of the rock is determined by their respective faiths.

- 14. T or F: Whether one is a creationist or an evolutionist, one's worship is not affected.
- 15. T or F: It takes more faith to be a Christian and believe in a God who created all that now exists.

C. The Reward Of Faith

So with whose faith would you side? Who really recognizes that there is a God to be worshiped? When making one's final choice in this matter, consider this: Both the atheist and the Christian will eventually die. If the atheist is correct, then the Christian, when he or she dies, **loses nothing in reference to his or her faith**, which in the end, was really false. The Christian deceived himself or herself because there really was no God.

Nevertheless, because of his or her faith, the Christian lived as if he or she would give account of one's behavior before an eternal Judge. The Christian thus lived a good life in reference to his or her relationship with their neighbors. The Christian helped others. He lived morally the best he could because of his belief that he would eventually be held accountable for his behavior.

But now consider the gamble of the atheist. When the atheist dies, he may come to the realization that he gambled with his faith in reference to the origin of all things. The atheist did live according to the mandates of human laws. It was likewise his desire to do good to his fellow man. He sought to be a good citizen only because of the motivation that a peaceful and orderly society is best for the orderly existence of humanity. But if the Christian is right, then the atheist misses out on everything! He loses all his stake in the gamble. There was actually a God and final judgment.

Now the question is with whose faith is one willing to gamble? For us, we would rather live with the Christian's faith, with the hope of being right when we die. We are not willing to gamble with the faith of the atheist, with the possibility of being wrong . . . forever. Each person has a choice as to which faith he or she will live in this life, while there is still a chance to change to a faith that there is life beyond death.

It is for the preceding reason that we seek from the God in whom we believe, instructions as to how He

would be worshiped. If God is a God of creation, then certainly He did not leave His creation to invent worship behavior according to the personal inclinations of the created. This would be very frustrating, that is, to worship a God of creation whom we conclude is above that which He created. We thus seek to discover this God, and then worship Him according to His desires, not our own desires. This should set all of us on a road to study our Bibles in order to discover the worship of this God in truth.

CONCLUSION

It may be that some are confused about what worship truly is because it has been confuse with the assembly of the disciples, especially on the first day of the week. This is a common misunderstanding. But we must keep in mind that the disciples can assemble **without** their assembly being a "worship service," even on Sunday. And, they can individually worship, without an assembly with the other disciples. Worship is not qualified by assembly.

Actually, when worshipful disciples come together in assembly they have the choice to worship together. But this is not necessarily the case when disciples come together to discuss the ministry of each disciple, or the work of the church as a whole.

We must not conclude, therefore, that every assembly of the disciples inherently constitutes an "hour of worship." Nevertheless, it is only natural that worshipful people would want to assemble together in order to worship as the community of God. However, we must keep in mind that there is no prescribed "order of worship" revealed in the New Testament, as there is no order of any assembly of the disciples for any reason. The order of assembly is the decision of those who come together in assembly, as long as the assembly is not chaotic, but in the general order that was prescribed by Paul: "Let all things [in assembly] be done properly and in order" (1 Co 14:40). It is not wrong for the disciples to come to an agreed "order" of the assembly in order to prevent confusion and chaos.

So one might ask what the early disciples did when they came together in an orderly manner to worship together. This is where every attending individual of the assembly must read their New Testament and discover what the disciples should do in an assembly that is designated for worship.



CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- 1. Why did Elijah mock the prophets of Baal in their hysterical extravaganza of making a sacrifice to Baal?
- 2. What lessons can be learned from what Elijah commanded to do with the Baal prophets?
- 3. Why do idol gods behave as their creators think they should?
- 4. Why can God hear the still small voice of a whispered prayer?
- 5. Why was Elijah's mocking of the behavior of the Baal prophets justified?
- **6.** What would be the definition of legalized worship?
- 7. Why does legal worship contradict justification by faith and grace?
- 8. Why is true worship not confined to a specific place?
- Why must true worship not be confined the ceremonies?
 Why is the atheists and the Christians' belief in the beginning of all
- things a matter of faith?

 11. Why must the atheists believe in the theory of evolution?
- 12. What is the atheist gambling in reference to his faith?
- 13. If the atheist is right concerning beginnings, what does the Christian loses when he dies?
- **14.** If the Christian is right concerning his or her beliefs in reference to beginnings, what does the atheist lose when he or she dies?

For continued research on this subject, download Book 44, Experiential Religion vs Word-Based Faith from the Biblical Research Library at: www.roger-e-dickson.org

ABREVIATIONS OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - Gn, Exodus - Ex, Leviticus - Lv, Numbers - Nm, Deuteronomy - Dt, Joshua - Ja, Judges - Jg, Ruth - Rt, 1 Samuel - 1 Sm, 2 Samuel - 2 Sm, 1 Kings - 1 Kg, 2 Kings - 2 Kg, 1 Chronicles - 1 Ch, 2 Chronicles - 2 Ch, Ezra - Er, Nehemiah - Ne, Esther - Et, Job - Jb, Psalms - Ps, Proverbs - Pv, Ecclesiastes - Ec, Song of Solomon - Ss, Isaiah - Is, Jeremiah - Jr, Lamentations - Lm, Ezekiel - Ez, Daniel - Dn, Hosea - Hs, Joel - Jl, Amos - Am, Obadiah - Ob, Jonah - Jh, Micah - Mc, Nahum - Nh, Habakkuk - Hk, Zephaniah - Zp, Haggai - Hg, Zechariah - Zc, Malachi - MI

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - Mt, Mark - Mk, Luke - Lk, John - Jn, Acts - At, Romans - Rm, 1 Corinthians - 1 Co, 2 Corinthians - 2 Co, Galatians - GI, Ephesians - Ep, Philippians - Ph, Colossians - CI, 1 Thessalonians - 1 Th, 2 Thessalonians - 2 Th, 1 Timothy - 1 Tm, 2 Timothy - 2 Tm, Titus - Ti, Philemon - PI, Hebrews - Hb, James - Js, 1 Peter - 1 Pt, 2 Peter - 2 Pt, 1 John - 1 Jn, 2 John - 2 Jn, 3 John - 3 Jn, Jude - Jd, Revelation - Rv

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