

Where's the Place of Worship?

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[0:00] We're going to talk about God tonight.

It's fitting that we do that. We're in church, right? God is not some spirit that's just floating around. Now, we do acknowledge, of course, God the Holy Spirit, but He's not a vapor like the Hindus teach or other things.

He's just going around in space, and anybody can sort of plug in any time and anywhere they want and worship Him in any particular form they so choose.

God is eternal. God is vast. He fills all of eternity and all of the universe. He is ever-present.

I've often said if you could go to the furthest galaxy, you know God is there. And because He is everywhere, He can be worshipped at all times by all people who know the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1:09] The only way you can come to God is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. We developed that theme last week. We often speak of God as Father, but He is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No man comes unto the Father but by Christ. Those are the words of Jesus in John 14. We cannot, nor do we want to, worship the Father apart from the Lord Jesus.

Most of the world is ignorant of that fact. And they go about and they talk to God or Allah or whatever name they put on it.

They don't come through Christ. Some pray to Him as the man upstairs. That always rubs me wrong. In John chapter 5, He had this to say that all men should honor the Son.

By the way, honor there is another word for worship. All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honored not the Son doesn't honor the Father that sent Him.

[2:20] It grieves the Father. It grieves the Holy Spirit. When we don't acknowledge Christ Jesus. I remember watching a service on TV one time.

This was 30 years ago. They were pretty charismatic. They were trying to make trees walk. But they never mentioned Jesus one time. I kind of got fascinated just to see.

I had a little pen and pad. And they talked about the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit came to reveal Christ. And the Holy Spirit is grieved when we don't talk about Jesus and acknowledge Him.

Well, all of this is bound up in John chapter 4, which we've been looking at. God is the Father and God is the Son.

So who's the object of our worship? God the Father, God the Son. Somebody said to Dr. MacArthur one time, I've been taught that it's blasphemous to pray to anyone except the Father.

[3:23] Is that true? Here was John's response. No, that's not true. It sounds like somebody has just gotten a little bit of knowledge and twisted a few scriptures and are trying to pass themselves off as a Bible teacher.

I wish John would not shade it. You know, he needs to tell like he did. You can't even worship God the Father unless you worship the Son. You can't even come before God the Father unless you come in the name of the Son.

If you're going to pray to the Father, you're praying to the Son. They're one and the same. I and the Father are one. If you're going to honor the Father, you're going to honor the Son.

If you're going to ask of the Father, you're asking of the Son. If you're going to praise the Father, you're praising the Son. They come together. There's no way to isolate the two. Therefore, without Jesus Christ, no one worships God at all.

And if we do worship God, we worship God as Father and as Son. And you have every right to go to the Son, to praise the Son, to petition the Son as you would the Father.

[4:33] We are called upon to worship the Father and the Son. And again, that is all bound up in John chapter 4. Jesus says it in a way that really fits his humiliation.

The fact that he was a humble man when he came in his humanity to earth. He never said, hey, worship me. What are you all doing, you know? He just affirms worship.

God is spirit who is my Father. And he told us God is spirit in John chapter 4. And he is the same essence. Therefore, you are worshiping Christ when you worship the Father.

But he doesn't say it in his humiliation. And the church understood this in the earliest years of the church. In those years, he was worshiped as Lord.

Jesus was worshiped as Lord. He was confessed as Lord in baptism. He is invoked as Lord in the Christian assembly. He is worshiped as Lord when knees bow before him.

[5:39] When you go into your closet. We talked about that in the very first lesson here. Which was 13 lessons ago, by the way. He is petitioned as Lord when we need help and we need strength.

Why? Because Jesus Christ is Lord. To the glory of God the Father. That's the bottom line of worship. And it's a very fundamental doctrine.

We come to God through Christ. Actually, we come to Christ in coming to God. Thomas, the person for whom I'm named. He fell on his knees after the resurrection.

And he looked at Jesus and said, My Lord and my God. What a confession. He knew exactly that he was fulfilling the proper perspective of worship.

God is to be worshiped. But only can be as he is perceived to be the one true God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the Father and the Son receive the same honor.

[6:43] So, who do we worship when we gather together? We worship the Father and we worship the Son. And then people want to say, Well, okay. What about the Holy Spirit? Well, and we've got to be a little careful.

The Holy Spirit is often called the silent member of the Trinity. He has fulfilled his role to be the great revealer, restrainer, comforter.

But there's nothing in Scripture that directly tells us, Okay, you worshiped the Father yesterday morning and the Son last night. So today you've got to worship the Spirit. There's no passage that says that.

But, genuine worship is energized in the power of the Spirit. It's energized there. It is the Spirit that allows us to come into God's presence.

Galatians 4 teaches that. Romans 8 teaches that. The Spirit allows us to come into the presence of God where we cry, Abba, Father. Abba being there, make word for Daddy.

[7:48] It is the Spirit's power and presence that we have access to worship God. And so the Spirit is part of worship.

Spirit is the driving energy. He is the power of true worship. And we don't want to set that aside, obviously. We don't want to deny the reality that the Spirit is our energy of worship.

But we would also say that if the Spirit is equal to the Son and equal to the Father, and He is, He's worthy to be worshiped also. But the Scriptures do not point out to us as such.

It's just a necessary observation to make. He is co-equal, co-eternal with the Father and the Son.

The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, is often referred to as the Spirit of God in a lot of passages.

In Romans 8, He's called the Spirit of Christ. Same Spirit. He is the radiation of God the Father and of God the Son. He's worthy of worship as such.

[8:54] So we don't hesitate to worship the Spirit as well as the Son and the Father. The three are one. But there's a uniqueness in the Spirit's ministry.

We see that defined more in the church age than the times before that. The Holy Spirit calls us to the Son. The Son calls us to the Father.

And so there's a sense in which the Spirit wants us to worship the Son. There's also a sense in which the Son wants to reveal the Father to us. So we worship the Father.

And yet all are worthy. All three persons of the Trinity. If you want to honor the Spirit, then worship the Son and worship the Father. That brings great honor to the Spirit of God. So what about John 4?

Who is the object of worship? Well, God is. Well, okay. God the Father, God the Son, or God the Spirit? Yes. But the Spirit is not some vague cloud that's undefined.

[10:00] And we don't call Him by just any name. And He's the Father. God the Father. And people say, well, He's the Father of all mankind.

Remember that? What was that saying? The brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. That is not what that's talking about at all. He is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's so essential. We go to Him as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. One in essence with Him. And as we worship Him, we worship the Son as well.

It is fitting that our hearts go out and worship to Christ as well as the Father. In Revelation, in chapter 14, there's a wonderful scene.

It says, and I looked, and lo, a lamb stood on Mount Zion. Mount Zion is very, very important to the Jews. To them, Mount Zion was a symbol of heaven.

[11:03] That's what the Jews looked at. They loved Mount Sinai. They often sang when they drew near to worship God in that holy hill. It was their emblem. And so, this is the kind of a vision of heaven that John has when the revelator is giving him the revelation.

Well, John looks and he sees the Lamb. And that Lamb is Christ. And he knows it's Christ because the Lamb has been slain before the foundation of the world.

And it's the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. And the Lamb is Christ. And then John wrote this, And with him, Christ, 144,000 having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And a voice from heaven like a voice of many waters and like the voice of a great thunder. And the voice of harpers harping with their harps. And they sang, as it were, a new song before the throne. And before the four living creatures who are angels and the elders, who I believe represent the church. And no man could learn that song, but the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth.

[12:19] So, there we have this picture of worship in heaven. And I've said to you, there's just a little stream that separates us from the church that's in heaven.

We think it's a billion miles away. It's just another dimension. They're probably right next to us right here. But we just cross over that stream and we're in glory. I like to cross that stream right now.

That is worship. We're going to worship in heaven. And we can start that now. We have been redeemed as special emissaries of God to proclaim the gospel.

These 144,000 are going to do that as emissaries during the tribulation period. And they're going to proclaim the gospel. And we see them here pouring out praise to the Lamb.

And the Lamb is Christ. Worshiping Jesus is right. We're going to carry that on into heaven. It's proper. He doesn't come right out in John chapter 4 with the woman at the well and say, well, you need to worship me.

[13:25] He did reveal himself to her as Messiah. I will speak to him, he. So we have every reason.

We have every right and every duty by commandment to come to the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

Energized by the Spirit. That is Trinitarian worship. When I think about the Spirit of God in bringing me to God and empowering me to serve Him and energizing for worship, you know, you're just driven to your knees to give glory and adoration to the Spirit, to the Son, and to the Father.

That's the focus of worship. But we should be greatly concerned with individuals or churches or denominations who are very vague in their worship of God.

Some churches don't even mention His name anymore. It's politically incorrect. So I'm concerned about those people whose worship seems to, you know, leave out the Spirit or leave out the Son or leave out the Father.

[14:39] I also worry that some people are in orderly or incestably focused on the Holy Spirit and they leave out the Son and the Father. We're to worship God in Trinity.

God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. Now, we've talked about in here in weeks past the importance of worship and the source of worship.

We've talked about the object, which is the Trinity. What about the sphere of worship? The sphere. Where do we go to worship? Where do we go?

And in the Old Testament, of course, they worshiped in temples, in tabernacles. They had some very specified geographical areas on which they were supposed to worship.

And they would gather. They gathered in Jerusalem once a year. So they could all go to the temple. But then they had synagogues.

[15:46] And before that, they had the tabernacle. But in John 4, which we've been studying, the Samaritan woman revealed what we worship on Mount Gerizim.

And you Jews are the ones that worship in Jerusalem. That's Mount Moriah. So really what she's implying there to Jesus is telling him which is the right place. I want to worship.

Do I go to Mount Gerizim? Do I go to Jerusalem? And which is the right place? And Jesus says, woman, believe me, the hour cometh when you shall neither in this mountain, and that was Mount Gerizim, or at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

So the answer is, neither one of those places. Neither one. He says very soon, neither one will be the place exclusive for worship, whether you're a Samaritan or a Jew.

They're going to be eliminated. Now, that is not to deny the place of the Old Testament temple and tabernacle. It is not even to deny the reality of the Old Testament ceremonial system or the sacrificial system.

[17:00] It's not to deny all the emblems and the pictures and the portraits that are drawn in the Old Testament that God gave them. But what he was saying is, there's a time coming when these symbols are going to pass away.

And you're going to have the substance, the reality. There will be a time when the Jews would no longer need a physical tabernacle. And, of course, the tabernacle was long gone.

It was made of animal skin. It was temporary anyway. And there would even be a time, although they didn't believe it, Jesus told them it would happen, when the physical temple would disappear. They won't need to be any more sacrifices. And they weren't going to have to have Jewish priests anymore. Why? Because the time is coming when every individual will be a living temple.

And everyone who follows Christ will be a priest. Every individual will be a living priest. And the sacrifice that Christ offers will be the one, full, final, permanent sacrifice.

[18:08] And that was intended to end all sacrifices. There's no longer a need to sacrifice. I've said this probably in here before, but I remember 20 years ago, 30.

I don't remember who it was now, but I knew him. He came to me and he said, I've got a religious question for you. And I said, okay. He said, I'm participating in a new church. And I really like it. And we have a great time on Sundays. And people love each other. But on Sunday night, the pastor takes us to Lake Copan and we sacrifice chickens to the Lord. So I just kind of said, do you fry them up?

I might join. I said, there's been one sacrifice, guy. You need to get out of there. Now, there was not anything wrong with those Old Testament symbols.

But they were symbols. God never did confine himself exclusively to the temple or to the tabernacle. There were times his presence was there.

[19:13] There were times he withdrew. And God is not limited to that. These were symbols. They weren't the reality. But God says, and Christ says in the new covenant, even the symbols are going to go inside.

The things that we focus on are going to become internalized. They're not going to be external. And so there will come an end of these things that have for 1600 years been identified with as places of worship in the old covenant.

Remember, when Jesus died, the screen, the curtain in the temple that separated the people from the Holy of Holies where the Shekinah dwelt, it was rent in two from top to bottom.

Who tore that? God. God tore it. God reached down and tore it. And I'm told from the writings of Josephus and others that if you could hook two locomotives up to that curtain going opposite directions, they couldn't pull it apart.

It was so strong. God just tore it like he would Kleenex. He just tore it. That represented that now everybody that believes can walk into the Holy of Holies, direct access to God.

[20:41] And in 70 AD, the entire temple was destroyed by Titus Vespasian, the Roman emperor. It was wiped out. The Samaritan temple had been destroyed 125 years before Christ.

They just went up there and there was just very little remains and they worshiped in the woods on top of the mountain. Actually, there are still some Samaritans, about 200 Samaritans that go up there now.

But they're not worshiping God because that isn't the way you do it. That system ended. Well, then if it isn't a temple and it isn't a special physical building, where do we worship God?

Where is the sphere? And let's establish this to begin with. You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. You're the temple.

We are the temple. 1 Corinthians 6. Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? You're the living temple of the Holy Spirit.

[21:47] Now that begs a question. Does that mean we can worship Him right here? Yeah. We can worship Him everywhere we go? Yeah. We take Him with us. We take the Holy of Holies with us.

The temple of God with us. God goes around in a very living residential presence. He lives inside us. And that means we can worship Him anywhere.

Richard Wurmbrand worshipped Him for 14 years in a Romanian prison, largely in solitary confinement. Solitary confinement. And he said He was there.

He was there and He ministered to Him. So we can worship Him at the beach. You can worship Him in the mountains. You can worship Him driving down the road. You can sit under a tree and do that.

Take a walk in the woods when the ticks aren't out. I have beautiful woods, but I can't go there now until about October or November. You can go out in the country.

[22:46] You can stay in the city. You can worship in your living room. You can sit on your porch and look up at the stars, which I love to do, by the way. I won't be able to do it tonight. You can go out and smell the fresh flowers in the morning and worship God under any kind of circumstance, any condition, because you are a living, breathing temple in which God dwells.

The sphere is unlimited. And I think these young men are maybe homeschooled, but if you're in public school, you can worship Him. He's inside you.

The Supreme Court can't keep you from that. Let me say one thing about the U.S. Supreme Court. They're not. Okay, there's a higher court. And the higher judge says you can worship anytime.

Now, does that mean I don't need to come to church? A lot of people use that as an excuse. A lot of them. I guess there's a sense, and when I'm trying to be totally honest here, that you don't have to come to church to worship God individually.

I want to add that word quickly. You can go out in the woods and worship Him individually. But, let me see. Let me give you another dimension to this.

[24:03] There is a place. There is a building today. I assume all of you know about this building. But there is a building where God, in Trinity, uniquely meets with His people.

Apart from the individuals. Although He meets with each one individually, it's in a group setting. It's corporately. There is a very special building where He meets with His people.

I would like you to see what building it is. Paul, in Ephesians 2, around verse 19, and Paul describes the Christian in some really neat terms, and he describes them collectively.

He uses them as a collective grouping, or body, if you will. Paul there doesn't see Christians as individual temples, sort of running around disconnected.

Some in their living room. Some watching the stars at night. Some out in the woods. He sees them collectively, and he says in verse 19, you are no more strangers and sojourners.

[25:19] But then he adds this, but you are fellow citizens with the saints. See, that draws us all together, doesn't it? With the saints. And I would suggest to you living saints, and saints that have gone on, who are still alive too.

They're just in the heavenly dimension. But we are linked together as fellow citizens in the kingdom of light. We're all fellow citizens.

We have that in common. We have a common citizenship. That's groupthink. And then he says, we also belong to the household of God.

Notice those words. We, the household of God. And so he's getting a little bit more intimate there. What does that mean? We are a family.

We're a family of believers. So there's something to be said about coming together. We came together Sunday morning.

[26:18] We came together Sunday evening. We're here tonight. We'll be here Wednesday night, some of us. Back Sunday morning. There's this common citizenship and we're linked together by a blood bond as family.

We have common blood. I mean, I'm all positive. You guys may be something else, but we really have common blood. It's the blood of Jesus, right? Blood of Jesus. We're family.

In verse 20 of Ephesians, and we are built. Now all of a sudden, we're a family and we have a building. We are built.

We are built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone. He's the cornerstone of that building.

And we are the building fitly framed together that grows up to be a holy temple in the Lord in whom we collectively are built together for a house of God through the Spirit.

[27:26] Wow. God has a building. It's amazing. You know what that building is? It is the visible living assembly of the redeemed saints.

When we come together like this, we constitute the temple of God in a unique way. We each individually have the temple, but we come together on Sunday morning, Sunday night, Monday night, Wednesday night, and collectively, we become one great temple in which God dwells. That's the local church of believers. And of course, in every church, you've got some unbelievers too, but that's the church of believing saints. 1 Peter chapter 2 says, ye are living stones built up a spiritual house.

Living stones. And when we come together like this, we constitute a place of worship where God manifests Himself in ways that are unique to the church.

And He does not manifest Himself alone. He moves through each of us that are true believers. He moves through us and through others. God uniquely meets with His church.

[28:47] And when we come together for prayer and praise and worship and Bible study and baptism and the Lord's Supper. It's a very unique experience.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, Paul said this, You are collectively again the temple of the living God. As God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them.

God moves in our midst when we come together. God moves with His wonderful presence. And if you're not experiencing that on Sunday morning or other times, then kind of go back and examine where you're at in worship.

And remember, worship is a giving experience. It's what we give the Lord. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 9, Paul says, You are God's building. You are, again, to use that word, you are God's building.

And then in verse 16, You are the temple of God. All these are very familiar to Jewish readers back in the first century. In Romans, it says the same thing.

[29:51] And then in Hebrews, it says, That since a new and living way has been made, and since we are to draw near and worship, let us, listen to this, not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

Do never forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We're assembling together. Why? Because when we come together in a marvelous, unique way, we become the living temple of God collectively.

And so when you come into this place on the Lord's Day, and what is the Lord's Day? Every day of the week. Deal with something that poured out Sunday morning. Every day. With a heart set to worship and you gather with others that have white, precious faith, God is here in a marvelous, a very real way to accept our worship.

We are not a building made with stone. We are a building made with living flesh. So we can worship God any place. We can worship Him alone. We can walk in the woods.

We can worship out in the isolation of privacy. But we must also worship God in the assembly of His redeemed people.

[31:10] As it says in the Hebrews passage. And it really stimulates one another to love, to godly works that He's set out before us. Guys, we can't survive out there alone.

It's just too brutal. And it's getting lonelier. It's getting lonelier. It's getting bad. People's turning against us. The church. I heard a guy today on YouTube.

Boy, I've never watched him. Bill Mayer? Mayer? Boy, he got blasphemy. He was blaspheming God. It was bad. I turned him off.

We need each other to survive. And there's strength in this collective assembly. And we are living stones and we need to be piled one on another.

And that becomes the habitation of God. So again, worshipping God is not really a geographical issue, but that doesn't mean there's no congregation of believers.

[32:12] It doesn't mean there's no special building. There is. It doesn't mean there's no special place. Now this building is not the church. Right? The church comes into this building on those days.

And I've said before, if a tornado blows this building down, we're going to worship Sunday. We're going to worship Wednesday. If a tornado wipes this place out, we're going to worship. We might do

it up at my farm.

We could do it or another church. And there's plenty that would allow us to do that. We're going to worship. This isn't the church, but the church comes in here. So we come together with God's redeemed people.

And dare I say, we don't need special priests. We don't need special sacrifices. We don't need masses. That was the heir of the Roman Catholic system. We are living priests.

The sacrifice for once has been offered. We have, because of that sacrifice, immediate access to God on our own. Hebrews 4.16 We have immediate access to the Lord.

[33:21] We can go to Him when we need mercy and grace. When do we not need mercy and grace? We are the living temple. That's what it says. Peter says the church is the house of God. And he doesn't mean the building.

He means the living stones. The people are the house of God. And so I say this to you. You need to be here on the Lord's Day. You need to be here every Lord's Day when God instituted His worship to take place on the first day of the week.

He did so that we'd be faithful to it. We do that, by the way, to honor the resurrection. But we meet other days of the week. And we're to worship every day at all times. And He expects us to be faithful to it.

If there's something in your life that you need to be faithful to, it's the assembling together. Because we won't survive out there alone. And besides, we kind of fly in the face of the demand of God if we forsake the assembling together of ourselves.

One of the pastors, I think it might be Ned Sauci, but he said, it's amazing how God will bless a guy or a family, you know, and they get blessed with good salary, work, and next thing you know, he's bought a cabin at Grand Lake and a boat.

[34:38] And God blessed him with all those and we never see him again. And he's out on the lake. We need to come together. The stimulation we receive from church is critical to our spiritual life.

We come into contact with the Trinity in this marvelous, unique, and wondrous ministry that he accomplishes, can accomplish much through us that we won't get done in isolation.

Each Lord's Day, we should find ourselves here worshiping God with His redeemed people and when we forsake that, eventually we'll leave the fellowship and put ourselves on the outside.

I always remember the man, this is a common story, but did not attend church faithfully at all. He was kind of a C, E, and M Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day.

And the pastor went to see him and it was winter and he had the fire in the fireplace and all the coals and he said, I don't need the church to worship, I can worship. And the pastor, of course, separated those coals, they all went out.

[35:49] Brought them back together, they reignited. He said, that's the church. We draw energy and strength and warmth from each other. And the preacher told him, he said, my friend, I don't see you at church on Lerz.

You only come when it's convenient and when you feel like you need to and you miss. I just wish you'd come all the time, but the man just didn't seem to get the message. But he did the coals and it became apparent to him.

It's really important also not only that we worship God everywhere at all times, but that we come together in the assembly of his redeemed people, stimulate one another to love, to do good works, to honor and worship the Lord, and we should not allow a week to go by in our lives that we haven't set aside a special time to worship God individually and a special time to worship God collectively with his people.

That's what worship is. That's what worship is.

Thank you.