

Part II, Lesson 33

Isaiah

The Lord is Salvation

Worship,
Two

Isaiah
58:5-7

*Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex
Curriculum*

Isaiah Part II, Lesson 33

Worship, Two

Isaiah 58:5-7

In the second of our series on worship, we will hear God contrast two ways to worship. He will begin with the way not to worship. Read Isaiah 58:5.

The question asked here is one that is intended to get a “no.” He has just condemned their way of worship. In the last lesson we saw their hypocrisy. They said that they wanted God near, but did many things that kept the true God away. They pouted: God wasn’t seeing all their religious activity.

So, God asked them, “Do you think that this is the kind of fast day that I am after?” Isaiah 58:5, *The Message* translation. He is about to test their understanding as to what He expects of them. He lists several things that they might think are God’s expectation for worship.

First, God said, is my kind of fast (day of worship) a time for a person to humble himself or herself? What He is really asking is, “do you think that a day of worship should be a day for someone to show off their false humility?” They were doing all sorts of things to act as if they were humble. Have you ever seen someone who tried to make other people think they were humble, shy and modest? They walk differently, they hold their head differently, they speak differently and they often have a different posture. It is pretty easy, in most cases, to spot someone putting on the “humble act.”

It’s sad to say, but some people come to church in their “humble clothes.” They act in church like they do no where else in the world. From Monday through Friday they act so superior and stuck-up, they “dress to the nines,” but on Sunday, it is “poor, pitiful me.” That is what was happening in Israel.

Second, God said that they were bowing their head like a reed. Now, get the picture: Think about standing near some reeds growing at the edge of the lake or river. They normally stand straight up, but when the wind blows, all of them bend. They all bend the same way. Which ever way the wind blows them, they all point that direction. Now, think again: Picture a group of people in church. They are told to bow their heads, and everyone does. They are told to stand up, and everyone does. They are told to sit down, and everyone does.

Now, is that wrong? Not necessarily. It is wrong if you are going along just so you will not be different, or if it is something you do just because it is expected of you. The people spoken to here were just going through the motions. Their worship was just so much busy work. It obviously wasn’t changing their lives. It was that which everyone was supposed to do on the Sabbath and so everyone did.

Third, God asked if His kind of fasting included “lying on sackcloth and ashes?” One of the ways to show humility in Isaiah’s day was to wear a burlap robe, lie down in public on coarse fabric (like burlap sackcloth), rub cold ashes in your hair, face or body, or even spread those ashes out on burlap and lie down on it.

When Sennacherib was at war with Jerusalem, his spokesperson shouted threats to the people on the wall. When King Hezekiah heard the message “he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord…” He also had his secretary and the priests dress that way, also. (II Kings 19:1, 2). The sackcloth was his act of humility.

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Fourth, God asked if that was “a day acceptable to the Lord?” God is really saying that their kind of hypocritical worship didn’t even come close to being acceptable to Him. God expected more of them and they should have known it. What they were calling worship was really an insult to God. They thought that they could fool God like they were fooling other humans. Or maybe they just didn’t care. They were just doing what other people expected of them.

God then asks the question again. Read Isaiah 58:6, 7. He is now telling them what He considers true worship. The first thing we notice is that nowhere does He say anything about going to church and having an organized worship activity. No, He lists things that they haven’t even thought of even though He has told them many times before.

First, God said, “loose the chains of injustice...” which means don’t take advantage of those who owe you.

Second, He said, “untie the chords of the yoke...” which means don’t take advantage of those who are weak and defenseless.

Third, He said, “set the oppressed free...” which means set free the slaves and don’t take advantage of those who must sell themselves into slavery.

Fourth, He said, “break every yoke.” They were not only to remove the yoke, but to make sure it was never used again.

Fifth, He said they were to “share your food with the hungry...”

Sixth, He said they were to provide “the poor wanderer (homeless) shelter...”

Seventh, He said they were to provide clothes for those who had none.

These seven things would show how much they loved and worshipped God. What a difference this was to the way people were doing worship. God was obviously telling them that loving and providing for others was more important to Him than going to church. Does that mean we should not go to church? Absolutely not! But if we think we are saying that we love God by going to church, but neglect those who are in need, we lie to ourselves and frustrate God. In other prophecies, God makes it clear that He hates that kind of behavior.

The last thing in verse seven is a heartbreaking word from God, don’t “turn away from your own flesh and blood.” They were hiding behind their so-called worship, ignoring the pain and suffering of their own families...their own people who were being mistreated and in great need.

*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

Page Three

Scripture Memory: “Is this not the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and unite the chords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?” Isaiah 58:6

Lesson Goal: To guide students to a better understanding of what God calls worship.

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Worship, Two—Isaiah 58:5-7

Student Worksheet

Listen during the lesson for this information:

1. They said that they wanted God _____, but did many things that kept the true God _____. They pouted: God wasn't seeing all their religious _____.
2. What four things does God list that they might think are God's expectation for worship?
3. What King of Judah "tore his clothes and put on sackcloth?"
4. What seven things does God list as true worship?
5. What is the heartbreaking word from God in verse seven?

Page Four

Scripture Memory: "Is this not the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and unite the chords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" Isaiah 58:6

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God's Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus' name. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.