

# TRUE WORSHIP AND THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE WORLD

## DEUTERONOMY 12:29–32

### *Introduction*

Idolatry and false worship are sweeping the earth today. People are worshipping everything from animals to graven images, from possessions to some idea in their minds of who God is. But even more tragic than this, there are many who are worshipping themselves, that is, man himself. And when man himself is worshipped, this leads to the worship of science, medicine, business, government, and a host of other endeavours created and controlled by man. But the worship of man has one fatal flaw: man dies. After just a few short years upon this earth, man ceases to exist. He leaves this earth. What then?

But there are many prior questions even to this question. What happens to a person when he confronts one of the serious enemies of life:

- => accident?                      => disease?                      => financial difficulty?
- => loss of loved one?            => divorce?

What happens to a person when he faces one of these or a host of other serious problems? The worship of self, of man, ends upon this earth. Humanistic worship is stopped at death. Then what?

True worship was of critical concern to Moses. The Israelites had to understand the difference between false worship and true worship. Their eternal fate depended upon this understanding. If their worship was a true worship, they would inherit the promised land of God. But if their worship was a false worship, they would be excluded from the promised land, never allowed to enter it. Even after entering the promised land, they faced the very real danger of being tempted by the false worship of the world, that of the Canaanites. If they allowed themselves to be seduced into false worship, they would then be expelled from the promised land. It was therefore necessary — absolutely necessary — that they be able to discriminate between true and false worship. This is the all-important subject covered by this Scripture: *Laws That Regulate the Worship of God: A Picture of True Worship*, Deuteronomy 12:1-32.

- I. True worship obeys the laws and regulations of God (v. 1).
  - II. True worship must reject all false worship (vv. 2-4).
  - III. True worship seeks the place where God's Name is honoured (vv. 5-7).
  - IV. True worship does not worship as everyone sees fit, but as God dictates (vv. 8-14).
  - V. True worship does not abuse the blood nor misuse the tithe (vv. 15-18).
  - VI. True worship supports the ministers of God (v. 19).
  - VII. True worship has a spirit of discernment: discerns between what is allowed and what is forbidden (vv. 20-28).
  - VIII. True worship does not conform to the religious practices of the world (vv. 29-32).
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***Deuteronomy 12:29–32 True Worship and Conformation  
to the Religious Practices of the World***

True worship does not conform to the religious practices of the world. The seduction of false worship is a constant problem for the believer of any generation. This Moses knew; therefore, he gave a strong warning to the Israelites.

1. God was going to give His people a great victory over the enemies of the promised land (v. 29). Once they had achieved victory, they were going to face an enticing temptation, a strong, strong seduction: the seduction of false worship and false gods. They were going to be tempted to participate in the false worship of the Canaanites by adopting their religious practices, at least some forms of their worship.
2. But the warning from Moses is forceful: they must not worship the LORD God by following the false religious practices of the Canaanites (vv. 30-31). The Canaanite religion was full of all kinds of abominations, detestable things, things such as...
  - prostitution provided by women serving as temple priestesses
  - child sacrifice
  - idol gods scattered all over the land
  - priests who encouraged false worship
  - worship centres enticing people to false worship, worship centres on the high mountains and hills and under every major tree

The Canaanites had many gods, but the highest god was El. The god that was most worshipped day by day was Baal. The word *Baal* simply means lord. Other false gods and idols were Hadad (the storm god), Dagon, and the goddesses Asherah, Astarte and Anath. Archaeological discoveries show pictures of gross gods and goddesses with mixed bodies of animals and men as well as characters including serpents, cultic doves, bulls, goats, lions and others.

As Scripture declares, the false worship and religious practices of the Canaanites were abominable, detestable to God. In particular, note that Moses stresses the practice of child sacrifice (v. 31). This heinous crime was a capital offense in the eyes of God (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5). Child sacrifice was murder, and the offender was to be executed. In fact, God warned the Israelites: if they ever began to practice child sacrifice, they would be expelled from the land (see 2 Kng 17:17-18).

The warning was clear and forceful: God's people must obey all of God's commandments. The believer must not add to the commandments nor take away from them. There must never be any idolatry or false worship among God's people.

***Thought 1.*** True worship does not conform to the religious practices of the world. The warning is clear:

=> No church must ever conform to the religious practices of the world.

=> No church must ever adopt or allow a false religious practice or ritual.

=> No believer must ever allow himself to be seduced or enticed by some practice of false worship.

Idolatry and false worship permeate society. Most people have created a god within their minds that allows them to live as they want, that justifies their morality and behaviour. And tragically, carnal, fleshly behaviour is the lifestyle that most people wish to live. When they have need or a desire, they want the right...

- to tell little white lies
- to give way to the flesh
- to satisfy some craving
- to live as they want
- to secure what they want
- to do what they desire
- to react as they feel
- to accept and reject people as they wish
- to curse or use profanity
- to ignore, neglect, deny God as they will
- to use the tithe themselves
- to attend worship as they wish
- to put off accepting Christ until they are ready

The point is this: people create a false god within their minds, a false god that allows them to live as they want. There is no difference between the false god of the Canaanites and the false god created within the minds of so many people. False gods lead to disobedience, and disobedience is an abomination, detestable to God. Believers must not conform to the practices of false worship. On the contrary, believers must obey God; they must do everything God says. They must never add to what God commands nor take away from what He commands. Believers must conform exactly to the commandments of God, not conform to the religious practices of the world. Both the New and Old Testaments state the principle perfectly:

*Acts 2:40* With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

**Rom 12:1-2** Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

**1 Cor 7:31** Those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

**1 Cor 6:17-18** But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

**2 Cor 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

**Eph 5:11** *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

**2 Kng 17:15** *They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, “Do not do as they do,” and they did the things the LORD had forbidden them to do.*

**Ezra 6:21** *So the Israelites who had returned from the exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbours in order to seek the LORD, the God of Israel.*

**Psa 119:115** *Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God! ■*