

- **In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**
 - **Biblical Theology of Worship**
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Slide 2: Worship in the Old Testament

- For most people, the Old Testament feels like a difficult and irrelevant book.
 - Specifically, when it emphasizes the Temple, sacrifices, and priesthood, it seems very distant to people with modern and secular minds.
 - However, in ancient times, these things were the center of thinking about worship, and without understanding them, the New Testament cannot be properly understood.
 - Most books on Christian worship focus only on the practices and words of the New Testament era and ignore the fundamental points that are common to both the Old and New Testaments.
 - To know the theology of worship, it is essential to understand how the topics of God's revelation, salvation, the covenant with Israel, and living as a distinct nation of God are connected to worship.
 - When these topics are connected with worship and carried over to the New Testament, the Bible's unique teaching becomes clear, especially when compared with the worship and thinking of ancient Gentile nations.
 - However, sometimes the New Testament speaks about worship in a way that seems very different from the Old Testament.
 - Although there are many commonalities between both testaments, the Gospel has changed many old methods and concepts of worship.
 - Throughout history, Christians have mistakenly applied Old Testament words and concepts to the Church and Christian worship.
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Slide 3: Sacred Places in the Ancient World

- People of ancient times wanted to know where the gods lived and what their names were so they could contact them.
- Some places were considered sacred, and worship was performed there by building altars.
- Associated with every temple was a story of how that place became the dwelling of a god.
- If one god had many temples, it was understood that there is one original place, and the rest are merely copies of it, such as Mount Olympus in Greek mythology.

- In some nations, large temples were not customary, but it was still essential to know where God's presence could be found.
 - The Canaanite people, among whom the Israelites came to live, worshiped gods like Baal, El, and Anat.
 - According to ancient Ras Shamra texts, these gods lived on specific mountains where heaven and earth met, and from there, their power influenced the whole land.
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Slide 4: The God of Israel

- In contrast to this background, the Old Testament states that the Creator God of the universe revealed Himself to Israel's forefathers at specific times and places.
 - He promised Abraham, then Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants that He would make them a great nation, give them the land of Canaan, and through them, all the nations of the world would be blessed.
 - Thus, it appears that a relationship with the true God is possible only through the grace given by Him.
 - When God appeared, He did not just show power but also gave promises and covenants.
 - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob built altars where God revealed Himself.
 - They did not offer sacrifices just anywhere, but only at those places where God had revealed Himself, to show that they believed in God's promises and that the land actually belonged to God.
 - Although God's actual place was considered to be heaven, He revealed Himself at specific places to make His will known.
 - God's greatest revelation to Israel occurred at Mount Sinai when He brought them out of Egypt having saved them.
 - There, God explained the details of His covenant and told them how they should worship.
 - In the Song of Moses (Exodus 15), the whole land is described like God's holy mountain—the place where God dwells and from where He rules forever. This concept is later fully realized in the selection of Mount Zion and the Temple, where all nations will come to seek God in the future (Isaiah 2:3).
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Slide 5: Worship and Redemption

- **Mount Sinai and Israel's Faith:**
- In the Bible, the worship of God's people is special because it is always portrayed as the worship of those whom God has saved.
- True worship does not begin with human thought or invention, but with God's action.
- The opening parts of the Bible tell that God revealed Himself, freed His people from other gods and powers, and taught them how to respond to Him.

- Although similarities to Israel are found in the worship of many ancient nations, worship in the Bible is completely distinct due to its specific and unique beliefs.
 - When God saved Israel from Egypt and gathered them at Sinai, Moses went up the mountain.
 - God commanded him to remind the people with what power and love God had brought them to Himself (Exodus 19:3-4).
 - Then God told them what it means to be His people: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).
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Slide 6: Worship and Redemption (Continued)

- **Mount Sinai and Israel's Faith:**
 - Their salvation was the fulfillment of the promises God had made to Abraham.
 - Now they were being told how to maintain this relationship.
 - These three titles—"Treasured Possession," "Kingdom of Priests," and "Holy Nation"—all emphasize that Israel was separated from other nations and made special for God.
 - Their job was to show the world what life looks like under God's rule.
 - This was God's original purpose: that every nation of the world be blessed, just as He had promised Abraham.
 - As a priest, Israel was to serve only God and reveal His character and will to the world. Just as a priest is set apart to serve people, likewise Israel served the world through its purity and distinct identity.
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Slide 7: Worship and Redemption (Giving of the Word)

- The rest of Exodus 19 describes how the Israelites had to make special preparations to meet God, and it also describes what happened when God appeared to them.
- Moses received a command to set boundaries around the mountain so the people would remain safe.
- God strictly warned that no one should cross these boundaries or they would be killed.
- It was necessary for the people to be pure and clean before coming near God, because they were going to meet Him on God's holy mountain.
- The scene of God's appearance shows that something very powerful and beyond human understanding was happening.
- God came near to them in His great holiness and entered into their lives.
- During this amazing scene, God spoke to Moses.
- The purpose of this great appearance was so that the Israelites would always trust Moses to convey God's message to them correctly (Verse 9).
- The result of this trust was to be that they obey God's word (Verse 8).

Slide 8: Worship and Redemption (Giving of the Word - Continued)

- Exodus 20 reveals that Israel's relationship with God was not a confused or mysterious relationship.
- God wanted to have a personal and moral relationship with His people.
- That is why He gave them the Ten Commandments when He came to them.
- These commandments tell how to live with the God who brought them out of slavery and made them His nation.
- These commandments included exclusive loyalty to God, avoiding idolatry, respect for God's name, and keeping the Sabbath day holy (Verses 1-11).
- Along with this, commandments regarding correct behavior in domestic and social relationships were also included (Verses 12-17).
- It is not a new concept that worship is a lifestyle for the whole of life; this teaching was already present in the Old Testament.

Slide 9: Israel's Cultic Practices

- Like other ancient nations, Israel also expressed its relationship with God through sacrifices, rituals, sacred places, and priests.
- Priests acted as intermediaries between the people and God.
- This entire system is technically called a "Cult."
- This refers to the organized method by which a religious community performs its worship through specific acts, appointed rituals, and appointed religious leaders.
- Nowadays, the word "cult" is often used for strange or extremist religious groups, but that is absolutely not the meaning here.
- In the religions of Gentile nations, there were many different places of worship and religious systems.
- But in Israel, God commanded that there be a national system of worship and one central place of worship (Deuteronomy 12).
- Later, the prophets warned Israel whenever they deviated from this plan.
- They said this was a sign of spiritual weakness (e.g., 1 Kings 12:26-14:20).
- This worship system (Cult) played a very important role religiously and socially.
- It clarified the difference between sacred and common things, connected every individual to the community of God's people, and reminded the nation why it was set apart for God and how to live before Him.
- In many matters, Israel's methods of worship were similar to the methods of other nations.
- But the major difference was that God Himself had given Israel's methods new and special meanings.

- Their rituals were not merely traditions, but were based on God's truth and their relationship with God.
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Slide 10: The Importance of the Tabernacle

- **Israel's Cultic Practices:**
 - The instructions given in Exodus 25-31 are the same ones God gave to Moses alone on Mount Sinai.
 - God commanded that the Israelites joyfully give their best things as an offering so that a holy place (Sacred Tent/Sanctuary) could be made where God could dwell among them.
 - God commanded them to make a Tent of Meeting (i.e., God's dwelling place), exactly according to the pattern God would show Moses.
 - God's presence could not be linked to any picture or idol because when God spoke to them, they saw no form of His.
 - But still, the instructions are to build this tent as the sign of God's presence, which was to be placed inside the tent.
 - **Why was the Tabernacle built?** This tent was built to be a portable sign of God's presence because the nation was on a journey from Sinai to the Promised Land.
 - God had promised that He would be their God and they would be His people.
 - Therefore, He would be present with them in a special way, help them, and bless them.
 - The Tabernacle was a symbol of this reality: God is present among them like a King.
 - The Tabernacle was set up right in the middle of the army (camp) so that their entire life would remain connected with God.
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Slide 11: Priesthood, Sacrifice, and God's Glory

- **Israel's Cultic Practices:**
- In the Bible, God's glory appears when He shows His presence, even though He Himself is not visible.
- Cloud, fire, or light are only to hide His glory, because humans cannot see God's full glory.
- The glory that appeared on Mount Sinai later appeared in the Tabernacle.
- This is how it was known that God is among His people.
- God linked priests, sacrifices, and His presence together.
- A sacrifice was offered daily at the door of the tent, and God promised that He would meet His people there and speak.
- In this way, that place became pure and holy through God's glory.
- Common people could not go inside the tent, but priests were appointed by God to represent the people and serve in God's presence.
- The purpose of all this was:
 - That God remains with His people.

- That they know He is the God who brought them out of Egypt.
 - And that they may know God wants to dwell among them.
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Slide 12: God's Name and God's Presence

- **Israel's Cultic Practices:**
- Israel sinned by making a golden calf. They wanted to bring God near according to their own will, which was wrong.
- God was angry at this and said He would only send an angel before them, but would not go along Himself.
- Moses pleaded with God to be with the whole nation.
- God accepted Moses' prayer. Then Moses asked to see God's glory.
- God did not show His full glory but revealed His name and attributes: that He is a merciful, gracious, and just God.
- Despite the sin, God re-established His covenant.
- Moses' face shone from God's presence, which shows that access to God is only through the path He Himself creates.
- **The central message is:** God grants His presence through His Word and a chosen mediator.
- Worship is performed not by human-made methods, but by God-appointed methods.