

Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## When Worship is an Abomination, Part 2

### Satan's Attack against Worship

Revelation 12 is a most sobering passage that describes the activity of Satan directed first against Christ<sup>1</sup> but then, upon Christ's ascension into heaven, against the church.<sup>2</sup> Now if there is anything to attack when it comes to the church, it is her worship.

As we have seen, worship is the most important activity of the child of God.<sup>3</sup> Thus worship is one of the most guarded activities in the Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> Seven chapters (a total of 243 verses) are devoted to the worship of God in the Tabernacle. Compare this with the 31 verses used to describe the whole creation of the universe!

Why is there this emphasis on worship?

Worship revolves around God's fellowship with man, and man's ascribing honor and glory to the King. THERE IS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT!

And thus if we were to examine a history of spiritual warfare we would discover that it contains a detailed account of Satan's attack against God's worship!

Now this may surprise you, but Satan's long war against God and His worship was in full bloom during the days of Samuel. If ever there was a prime target for Satan and His devices it was Shiloh. Shiloh was the center of Old Testament Judaism which meant that while there clearly were other "holy places" associated with the worship of God<sup>5</sup> — like Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah — at this time, Shiloh was the hub of Old Testament worship. It set the pace for everything else. Its leaders were the most qualified — the very descendants of Aaron. It was the heart and soul of Judaism. This meant that Old Testament Judaism rose or fell based on the activities of this sanctuary.

And that is why the early portion of Samuel is Shiloh — centric both in detailing the abuses and corruptions of her worship, and God's consequent discipline which resulted in Shiloh being displaced as

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Revelation 12:4-5

<sup>2</sup> Compare Revelation 12:6

<sup>3</sup> Compare Isaiah 43:6-7 Philippians 3:3, and John 4:23-24

<sup>4</sup> Compare Genesis 3:24

<sup>5</sup> Compare also 1 Samuel 7:16

the center of Old Testament Judaism.

The passage at which we are looking is the beginning of the end for Shiloh. It was written to help us understand why God dealt so severely with Eli and his household. Indeed! After Eli, the priesthood shifted to the house of Zadok.

Why the shift?

Why did God deal so strongly with Eli?

In a sentence, because he and his children made the worship of God an abomination!

## **The Worship of Compromise**

Let us consider how corrupt worship is manifested. The worship of Shiloh was the worship of compromise.

1 Samuel 2:13-14, “And the priests’ custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.”

At first glance this may not sound like a compromise. However, let us look at the Divine standard.

Deuteronomy 18:3, “And this shall be the priest’s due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks [jaw bones], and the maw [the stomach].”

Leviticus 7:31-34, “And the priest shall burn the fat upon the altar: but the breast shall be Aaron’s and his sons’. And the right shoulder shall ye give unto the priest for an heave offering of the sacrifices of your peace offerings. He among the sons of Aaron, that offereth the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, shall have the right shoulder for his part. For the wave breast and the heave shoulder have I taken of the children of Israel from off the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest and unto his sons [and daughters]<sup>6</sup> by a statute for ever from among the children of Israel.”

Because the priesthood in Israel was not allowed to inherit the land, their inheritance was to be the Lord alone.<sup>7</sup> Thus, God established a system where His servants were to be supported with predetermined cuts from both the Sin and Peace offerings. These cuts were to be given to the priests. This therefore was the source of the food on which the priesthood and their family subsisted.

Now as we noted, God is very specific when it comes to the processes and procedures of worship. And here we find that the priest's support was no exception. From the Sin Offering<sup>8</sup> they were to receive the carcass and that portion of the entrails not given to God. This was to be eaten within the sacred precincts

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<sup>6</sup> Compare also Leviticus 10:14-15

<sup>7</sup> Compare Deuteronomy 18:1-2

<sup>8</sup> Compare also Leviticus 6:25-30 and 10:16-20

according to the rules of ritual purity. From the Peace Offering<sup>9</sup> they were to receive the breast and the right thigh of the animal. Yet unlike the Sin Offering, they were permitted to eat their portion outside the sacred precincts in a ritually clean place, and share it with their family.

This was the established practice from the very beginning, this became the norm in Judaism such that priests — regardless of their locality — lived off the support of the people of God. That is why when we consider our passage, we are not surprised that Hophni and Phinehas are taking food from the people. However what is a surprise is their obvious disregard for the word of God which clearly regulated what portions they were to claim as their own.

## Their Abuse of Worship

1 Samuel 2:13, “And the priests’ custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;

As we’ll see when we get to verse 15 and 16, the fat of any animal belonged to the Lord. Accordingly, in order to remove the fat from any portion that the priest was to receive, God prescribed boiling.<sup>10</sup> And this is what is going on here.

1 Samuel 2:14, “**And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.** So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.”

The significance of this list of devices used for boiling the sacrifice is that apparently anything that could hold water for boiling was used when it came to the worship overseen by Hophni and Phinehas. This was in contrast to the worship prescribed by God in which specific vessels for boiling were to be used.<sup>11</sup> From this we conclude that Hophni and Phinehas didn't care about proper worship. They were sloppy, reckless, and had little regard for God's word. For them, two things mattered: a show of godliness and the end result.

1 Samuel 2:14, “And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; **all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself.** So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.”

From this we conclude that while God had provided a means to support His priests, nevertheless Hophni and Phinehas' chose to subsist on a “pot luck” approach to the offering most likely in the belief that the hand of God in His providence should decide their portion. While on the surface, this undoubtedly was designed to look holy, yet on account of the teaching of the word of God, we see this for what it really is — arrogant and rebellious!

See when God has prescribed a way for doing something, and we choose rather to do it our way — whether it be in the realm of church discipline, worship, parenting, marriage, etc. — are we not elevating our opinion above God's and making ourselves wiser than the Lord?

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<sup>9</sup> Compare also Leviticus 7:14 and Numbers 6:20

<sup>10</sup> Compare Exodus 12:9; 29:31; Leviticus 8:31; Numbers 6:19; 2 Chronicles 35:13; Exodus 46:19-23

<sup>11</sup> Compare Zechariah 14:20

Such was the practice of these two brothers.

1 Samuel 2:14, “And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. **So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.**”

The import behind this statement is that what we have just read was the norm for these two priests. In other words, it wasn't that they slipped one time, and so here were lazy or loose with the worship of God. This was their modus operandi.

This brings us to a very important question: Why were they so loose when it came to the worship of God?

## **The Cause of Compromise**

1 Samuel 2:12, “Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.”<sup>12</sup>

The reason for why Hophni and Phinehas acted the way they did- they were ignorant of the Lord and His worship! Far from being able to instruct the people of God in the things of the Lord as a priest was supposed to do<sup>13</sup> these two men didn't have a clue. And so, they did what they wanted being careful to maintain a form of godliness!

The result of their corrupt worship

They got paid; they looked holy; and God's worship was compromised!

Is it little wonder why God rejected their worship?

What an important message for the people of God today! We live in an age where the content of our worship is driven largely by public opinion. Evangelism or emotionalism have been set as the twain goals of worship, we have sold out God.

Thus the bottom line when it comes to worship in our culture today is this: Is it inspiring? Did it entertain me? Was I able to express praise to God in my language?

Listen to the bulletin announcement of a prominent church in Colorado Springs.

Today! BEGINNING OF A CHANGE IN OUR WORSHIP SERVICES.

9:10: “Bright and Traditional” - A bright service that blends old and new hymns in a quieter, more stately atmosphere... This service should stir those who are motivated by the majesty of God and the rich heritage of the faith... and who enjoy celebrating both warmly.

10:45: “Light and Contemporary” - A lively service that combines new music, informal atmosphere, and active participation... This service should be most helpful to those who meet God

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<sup>12</sup> This verse will be dealt with in depth in coming chapters.

<sup>13</sup> Compare Malachi 2:7

best in an atmosphere of open joy, devotion and expression.

In short, the services will have the same message; different music, different atmosphere. WHY? To better serve the church family. We have all ages, we come from many backgrounds. We meet God in different ways...

Family of God let me be strong, while this has been the general approach of countless thousands of churches across America today when it comes to worship; it is no different than the approach of Hophni and Phinehas to the worship of God. It is nothing less than an abomination!

We have long since forgotten — or maybe we never knew — that worship must be driven not by our likes or dislikes, but by the will of the Lord as outlined in His Word! Thus we must debunk the notion which has been prevalent in our society for the last 50 years which says, “God doesn't care what you do so long as you mean it! Or do it from the heart!”

Listen, there is little doubt that Hophni and Phinehas meant what they were doing. Their method of allowing God's providence to determine their portion of the sacrifice was heart-felt. These were not thugs, but priests in a long succession of “servants of the Lord” who traced their lineage all the way back to Aaron himself!

Yet regardless of their heritage, their office, or their rank, because they compromised the worship of God, God disqualified them from office!

Ought we to expect God to disqualify us from Kingdom Service if we participate with the same disregard for God's worship?

Personally, I don't expect God to strike anyone dead today on account of compromise when it comes to His worship or service.<sup>14</sup> Rather, what I do expect for a people of God who do it their way, and have long since stopped worrying about what God thinks and approach God with sincerity yet in darkness is an impotency when it comes to the kingdom of God and the things of the Lord. And that's exactly what you see today.

2 Timothy 3:1-5, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

While this text sounds like a commentary on our passage, it is the latter part that I want us to focus on. This was Hophni and Phinehas. They maintained the show (though in reality they compromised the heart and soul of Christianity — worship)! Accordingly, “Christianity” in their day was a shell, an empty religion, a feel-good game. Thus, when God's enemies were at the gate and the people of the Lord went out to meet them we read of Israel's impotency, weakness, fear, and struggle in which they not only misused the ark of God — as if it were a lucky charm<sup>15</sup> — but they also lost that which represented the presence of God among them.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Compare Romans 2:4-5

<sup>15</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 4:3

<sup>16</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 4:11

And this is our generation! I'm not sure Christianity has ever looked so good- with our buildings, family centers, youth groups, day care centers, Christian schools, help groups, programs and outreaches. Yet by and large, in the words of Christ, we are “full of dead-men's bones and all uncleanness.”<sup>17</sup>

We're spiritually sick and wounded. We struggle with rudimentary obedience. We have a low view of God. Meekness, devotion, and love are empty words. We are unholy, impure, and, worst of all, we don't care. We have lost the presence of God in our lives today!

And so I make the suggestion that what is needed today is Reformation! Not in terms of our society turning to God. But in terms of the body of Christ humbling itself before the Lord and longing for His glory and good. We need to beg for nothing other than grace!

Listen, the penalty for compromised worship was born by our Lord on the cross — **SO DO NOT HEAR JUDGMENT IN THESE WORDS.** Yet according to 2 Timothy 3, the consequences for compromised worship remain in the form of weakness, spiritual illness, and impotency in our Christian walks.

Now don't misunderstand. I'm not suggesting that if we just “straighten up and fly right” when it comes to our worship, God will bless us — that would be pagan! Rather, I am suggesting that Hophni and Phinehas' failure when it came to worship was rooted and grounded in unfamiliarity with God's word, and ultimately unfamiliarity with God Himself. And insofar as we neglect God for a show, we too will know leanness of soul!

Family of God, that we might know the Lord and His strength, let us approach Him with sincerity and yet fidelity to the word of the Lord. Let us worship and serve Him on His terms. Let us set Him as the object of our desire. Let us long for Him and Him alone. Let us return to the Biblical order and priority — that we exist for God's honor and glory, and thus our worship must be given **NOT** in our own tongue according to our own preferences **BUT** in God's tongue (in spirit) according to His preferences (in truth). The health and welfare of our souls depend upon it!

## **The Worship of Personal Gain**

This is a very heavy message — and yet it gets even heavier. For Hophni and Phinehas were guilty not only of compromise in their worship, but also selfishness in the worship of personal gain.

1 Samuel 2:15-16, “Also before they burnt the fat, the priest’s servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.”

This constitutes a different kind of worship than that of verses 13-14. To see it, notice again we must look at the Divine standard. As we've seen, there was a very specific manner in which God was and is to be worshipped. Now whatever else we might say about the worship of God at the time of Samuel, there was no doubt when it came to the fat of an animal; it belonged to the Lord.

Leviticus 3:16, “And the priest shall burn them upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made

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<sup>17</sup> Compare Matthew 23:27

by fire for a sweet savour: all the fat is the LORD'S."<sup>18</sup>

Family of God, even today we know that it is the fat that gives a hamburger or steak its almost addictive taste. When one removes the fat and you remove the best part of the meal. Thus to teach the primacy of worship and THE ethic of the Christian life — that God is the best portion and so deserves the best portion of any sacrifice — the Lord established this principle that the fat is His! At any time or place wherein an animal is slaughtered for food, the fat is to be given to the Lord!

And so as we saw earlier, boiling meat factored quite largely into the life of the typical Jew. In fact religiously, the only time you didn't boil meat was at The Passover — you didn't have time.<sup>19</sup> Instead the meat at Passover was to be roasted.

Thus the fat of any animal at any time was the Lord's. To violate this brought with it dire consequences. Leviticus 7:22-25, “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat. And the fat of the beast that dieth of itself, and the fat of that which is torn with beasts, may be used in any other use: but ye shall in no wise eat of it. For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, even the soul that eateth it shall be cut off from his people.”

I'm not sure that there was another commandment as it related to the worship of the Lord that was more ingrained in the people of God than this — the fat belongs to God! And that is why we read the next few verses with amazement.

1 Samuel 2:15, “Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.”

Do you understand what is going on here?

That which was to be given to the Lord, Hophni and Phinehas took for themselves. Somewhere along the way, they got a taste for fatty meat. To satisfy their lust rather than kill an animal for themselves and violate the word of the Lord in private they publicly, shamelessly, and forcefully stole from the Lord. In other words, they approached the worship of God for personal gain!

1 Samuel 2:16, “And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.”

This is a shocking statement. In essence Hophni and Phinehas's approach was, “Give me God's portion or else!”

What is amazing about this is that in verses 13-14, Hophni and Phinehas at least shrouded their compromise in a cloak of godliness” “Cast the fork in the kettle, and we will take what the Lord provides!”

Yet here in verse 15-16 here there is no shame! They have discovered the best part of worship, and like an addict, have claimed it for their very own — regardless of the cost!

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<sup>18</sup> Compare also Leviticus 3:3-5; 7:30

<sup>19</sup> Compare Exodus 12:9

## The Cause

1 Samuel 2:16, “And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.”

Robert Gordon wrote this: “If even the ordinary worshipper had his sensibilities shocked by this behaviour, there was no excusing the priests who were supposed to instruct the people in these very matters.”<sup>20</sup>

And so having ruled out ignorance, why the actions of Hophni and Phinehas?

Skip down to verse 29. In God’s rebuke to Eli, this is what God said:

1 Samuel 2:29, “Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?”

Why did they take the fat of the sacrifice? It clearly was on account of their selfishness and thus a lust for the best of the meat and the choicest of every offering! In other words, they took the fat of the sacrifice not out of ignorance, but out of a lust for pleasure! They liked the fat!

And so get the picture here we must realize that worship for Hophni and Phinehas had become simply the means to please themselves. It no longer was about God, gratitude, or devotion. And so, the Lord spewed them out of His mouth essentially with this statement: to worship the Lord for personal gain is an abomination.

Once again, what a sober warning for are we any less guilty than Hophni and Phinehas when we approach worship as a consumer? When we demand certain kinds of music? When we expect entertaining sermons? When we desire a service that motivates or inspires? When we shift the purpose of worship from the pleasure of God to the pleasure of man?

I tell you that we are just as guilty and more, for we have in our laps the completed revelation of God! If Hophni and Phinehas could not plead ignorance, how much more can't we?

Oh how we need to hear this message.

And yet there is another way to take this passage for it has strong implications when it comes to any and every approach to the Kingdom of God — much less His worship.

Let me ask you Christian, are you seeking the best portion of life or are you giving it to God? Have you orchestrated your life such that it revolves around your wants, desires, needs, or will rather than the Lord’s?

Do you get angry with God when you don't get your way? Brothers and sisters, I don't know about you, but I stand, “Guilty as charged!” Like Hophni and Phinehas, I have sought the good things of life for myself. I have sought God's prerogatives: The determining of my own destiny, the praise and glory of men, and the fulfillment of my own will. And when I haven't received them, I have been angry.

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel*, LBI, page 82. Compare also Malachi 2:7



But once again, let us not despair. But let us go to the cross for Christ died for this sin. And so rather than hear condemnation, as His children, let us hear in this passage the exhortation that Paul gave to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15, “For the love of Christ constraineth [controls] us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

Hophni and Phinehas were disqualified because they lived for themselves, and thus did not seek the Savior. Let us here who have the Savior not live for ourselves, pleasure, or to enjoy the fat of life. But let us live for Him who died and rose again on our behalf!

A passage like this ought to inspire nothing less than this passion on the part of the people of God!

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## **About the Preacher**

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