



Created For Worship

From Genesis to Revelation to You

Noel Due



MENTOR





Dedication

*For Tim, Steven, and Merran,
who by the grace of God,
learned to worship him in their childhood.*

Copyright © Noel Due 2005

ISBN 1-84550-026-1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Published in 2005
in the
Mentor Imprint
by
Christian Focus Publications, Ltd.,
Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire,
IV20 1TW, Scotland

www.christianfocus.com

Cover design by Alister Macinnes

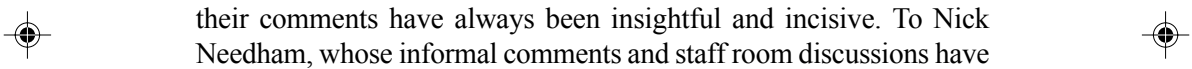
Printed and bound in Scotland by
Bell and Bain, Glasgow

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher or a license permitting restricted copying. In the U.K. such licenses are issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.





Acknowledgements



Thanks are due to many people, not least to Prof. Andrew McGowan and the staff and students of the Highland Theological College, Dingwall, Scotland, whose encouragement and stimulating fellowship have been given by God himself. To Martin Cameron, who has served as 'Librarian on Call' and given cheerful assistance at every turn. To Alistair Wilson, whose well laden shelves I mined regularly. To Hector Morrison and Jamie Grant, who have read the first drafts: their comments have always been insightful and incisive. To Nick Needham, whose informal comments and staff room discussions have often sent me back to think again. To the 'informal readers' Trish Rigby and Liz Priest, whose eyes have spotted a wrong reference or three. And most of all to my wife, Bev, who has patiently endured many absences (both physical and mental!) over the years of our life together. In the face of such help I must lay claim to the remaining deficiencies myself.



Chapter 1

The Battle for Worship

We are going to begin our exploration of the biblical theme of worship in an unusual place. Most books on worship (at least those that are concerned to establish a biblical basis for their discussion) begin by formulating a definition of worship, or by looking at the range of Hebrew and Greek words that are used to describe the actions, attitudes and characteristics of biblical worship. We will cover such things in due course, but we are not going to begin there. Instead we will start with four different sections of Scripture, each of which gives us an indication of the central importance of worship to human life and to the destiny of the creation, and each of which reveals something of the great battle for worship that surrounds us.¹

The first of these sections involves the events preceding Jesus' public preaching and teaching ministry, and in particular the event of the temptation in the wilderness. The second section comes from the books of the Psalms (themselves great and powerful expressions of the worship life of God's Old Testament people, Israel). We will see that Psalm 115 embodies one of the most important biblical principles regarding worship – one which we will see emerging in a number of different ways throughout this book. The third section we will look at is a part of Paul's opening letter to the Romans where the current conditions of humanity are directly linked with the matter of worship. Finally we will give some attention to a portion of the Book of the Revelation, in which the pivotal nature of worship is accentuated and its importance for heaven and earth made plain. In these passages some of the great issues that inform our understanding of worship are thrown into sharp relief, and in them we see with stark clarity the intensity of the battle for true worship, and the scope of the issues at stake.

Jesus' Baptism and Temptation

The synoptic Gospels all record the temptation of Jesus. While Matthew (Matt. 4:1-11) and Luke (Luke 4:1-12) give fuller accounts

than Mark (1:12-13), all three place it in the same location relative to the events that precede the opening phase of Jesus' public ministry. In all three, the experience of the temptation follows on immediately from his baptism and before his public ministry begins. It thus stands at the very gateway of his life's work. For this reason the battle is intense and its outcome crucial. Even in Mark's abbreviated account² the emphasis is on the clash itself with Satan. 'Jesus in the wilderness is confronted with Satan and temptation. It is the clash itself which is important; it is going on in Jesus' whole ministry'.³ Failure here, at this point, would be to lose all. What, then, is the significance of the temptation, both in relationship to the baptism, and in relationship to the unfolding public ministry?

1. The Meaning of Jesus' Baptism

(a) Identification and Proclamation of the Lamb of God

The baptism was a public event, as great in its significance for Jesus as for those who witnessed it. The event itself, and the declaration heard from heaven, 'You are my Son, in You I am well pleased,' were at once personal (with regard to Jesus) and declarative (with regard to John the Baptist and others who witnessed it). Here Jesus is introduced to the public stage, and as he takes up his life's work his Father bears testimony to his eternal love for him in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon him. The event is saturated with meaning and thus it cannot be reduced to one single line of significance. Even the fact that it was at once a baptism in water and the occasion for the descent of the Spirit tells us this. It was a baptism and an anointing, and both of these in the context of a proclamation, first from heaven and then to the multitudes.

The synoptic accounts all indicate that John the Baptist was the one who saw the Spirit descend on Jesus and who heard the voice from heaven. But John's account of the Baptist's ministry (John 1:29-34) leaves us in no doubt that he proclaimed to the assembled crowds that which he had seen and heard. According to John 1:31 the importance of John's baptizing ministry lay in its purpose to mark out or declare Jesus to Israel. 'And I did not recognize him, *but in order that he might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water*' (NASB), thus emphasizing the declarative nature of the event and (of particular importance in John's Gospel) the role of John

the Baptist as the *witness* to the truth. Both the event itself and John's ongoing ministry as witness, declared to Israel that her king had come. Moreover, it is also important to see that John proclaimed Jesus to be the Lamb of God in this context (John 1:29; 1:36). Jesus was recognized as the Lamb by virtue of what John had seen and heard in the baptism. The baptism/anointing cannot therefore be separated from Jesus' role as atoning sacrifice. He is at one and the same time the great Davidic king and the Sacrificial Lamb, and both of these by virtue of the Spirit's anointing.

(b) Kingship

Through the baptism and abiding presence of the Spirit bestowed on him there, Jesus was deliberately and publicly set apart by his Father for his work as Messianic King. In the Old Testament the kings of Israel were all anointed. This is seen in the accounts of Saul (1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1 cf. 15:1, 17) and David, for example, who was anointed three times: by Samuel, by the men of Judah, and by the elders of Israel respectively (1 Sam. 16:3, 12-13; 2 Sam. 2:4, 7; 2 Sam. 5:3, 17). Solomon was also anointed, by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet immediately preceding the death of David (1 Kings 1:34, 39, 45 cf. 1 Chron. 29:22). In Solomon's case (in 1 Kings 1:32-48) and in that of Jehoshaphat (in 2 Kings 11:9-20), we have the accounts of two enthronement ceremonies with approximately 150 years between them. In making this observation De Vaux concludes, 'there can be no doubt that all the kings of Israel were consecrated in the Temple, and anointed by a priest'.⁴ Thus, in Israel the reigning king was Messiah (the anointed one)⁵, who ruled on Yahweh's authority and under his covenantal grace.⁶ In the Old Testament, the king is thus characteristically designated as the 'anointed one' (e.g. Psalms 18:50; 20:6; 84:9 cf. 2 Kings 9:3) who had his place not by right, but by Yahweh's gracious choice.

Moreover, the anointing of the king was intimately tied to the reception of the Spirit. This is seen very clearly in the accounts of Saul (1 Sam. 10:10) and David (1 Sam. 16:13) and less clearly in the account of Solomon.⁷ This link between kingship and Spirit also gives the necessary context for David's prayer in Psalm 51:11: 'Do not cast me away from your presence; do not take your Holy Spirit from me.' While there is doubtless deep personal devotion in this prayer, the request involves more than personal piety. The prayer may be

understood as a plea that the anointing of the Spirit – so necessary for David to fulfil his duties as the anointed king – be not taken away from him. The removal of the Spirit is given special prominence in narrative describing David's predecessor, Saul. Saul had lost the enduring kingship of Israel through his own disobedience and unrepentant heart. The Spirit of Yahweh and all the blessing that this entailed had been taken away, and a spirit of madness had been sent to him by way of judgment (1 Sam. 16:14). While Saul was still king in name and function, he was no longer the one to carry kingship forward in Israel. There would be no dynasty of Saulite kings, as there would later be a dynasty of Davidic monarchs. In Psalm 51 the repentant David is seen in contrast to the self-justifying Saul, and the link between kingship and Spirit is thus preserved.

Here in the baptism, we see Jesus being anointed with the Spirit of his Father to enable him to fulfill his kingly task of bringing the Lord's righteousness to the ends of the earth. In the bestowal of the Spirit, Jesus is marked out as the King of Israel,⁸ but as a king whose reign and rule do not end with Israel. His kingship came *from* Israel, but is *for* the whole world, and thus his baptism/anointing has universal connotations. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and the Davidic king to whom all of the nations belong. When the reality of this event and all that it meant was sorely tested in the wilderness, it was not the outcome of one ethnic group or nation which lay in the balance, but the destiny of the whole earth.

(c) Sonship

In Israel, the anointed king was understood to be the adopted son of Yahweh, as seen particularly in the great royal Psalms 2 and 110. Israel's chosen king was regarded as none other than the adopted son of God, who was charged with shepherding Israel, God's nation-son (Exod. 4:22-23). The king could do so, however, only under the authority of God, as his vice-regent (hence Psalm 23, where the shepherd-king of Israel indicates his own submission under the Shepherd-King Yahweh). Psalm 2 expresses the point in the language of the Davidic covenant (Ps. 2:6ff. cf. 2 Sam. 7:13f.). In the Old Testament no credence is given to kingship which does not share the character of obedient sonship, whether this be in the kingship Psalms or in the wider kingship theology of the Old Testament. The king was Yahweh's 'beloved', the son of his choosing and the object of his

gracious affections. In response, the kings of Israel were to love the Lord and his Law, and lead the nation in covenantal faithfulness to him. They were to shepherd the nation with integrity of heart (so Ps. 78:70-72 cf. I Kings 9:4f.), and to walk in humble worship and adoration before the Creator God who had adopted Israel as his son, and appointed them to rule over this chosen nation. Israel, God's 'national' son (Exod. 4:22-23), had a chosen son on the throne, who was to care for the nation's welfare by walking in obedience to his and the nation's Creator/Father.

By virtue of the above, we can see that the anointing of the king was a pledge of love and assurance of Yahweh's covenantal faithfulness. It also laid upon the king covenant obligations to walk in obedience to the Lord, such obedience being particularly emphasized in the matter of worship.⁹ Such worship would be faithful to Yahweh's covenant Law, as expressed externally in the Temple, but as known internally in the attitude of a humble and obedient heart (cf. Ps. 51:17). He was to respect and honour the Temple worship because the Temple was the dwelling place of the Name of God who had chosen him to be his adopted son. Thus, one of the prime aspects of his shepherd/guardian role over Israel was the preservation of true worship (e.g. 1 Kings 15:9-14; 2 Kings 12:1-3), including the removal of the high places and the promotion of true worship in the Temple. The reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah are particularly commended in this regard, under whose sway we see a root and branch reform of worship in the land (2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Kings 23:1-25).

In short: where the kings of Israel led the nation in true worship of Yahweh, blessing was the result, and their reigns were commended in the writings of the former prophets. Where they refused to lead the nation in their covenantal obligations regarding worship, they and the nation reaped the curse of God's judgment. Their epitaph is entirely negative, often linking them with 'Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin' (e.g. 1 Kings 16:26; 21:22; 22:52 etc.), especially by raising up false worship centres and encouraging idolatry (of which we will say more later).

The anointing of Jesus with the Spirit at his baptism thus identifies him as the covenant king of Israel, who is both the vice-regent of God and the covenantally obligated ruler of God's people. His mission as the great Davidic King would hinge entirely on his worship of God. Its successful outcome would be a worshipping people, led by his own

faithfulness to the throne of his Father. Jesus' role as the purifier of the Temple (e.g. John 2:13-22) and the transformer of worship (e.g. John 4:19-24) is thus fully fitting for his kingly ministry over Israel and for his construction of a new Temple, far greater than that of Solomon or Herod.

(d) Priesthood

The anointing of Jesus at his baptism also has other connotations, specifically to do with priesthood. Like the ideas of sonship and kingship, the concept of priesthood implicitly speaks of God's sovereign choice and his subsequent commissioning for the task. The writer to the Hebrews gives voice to the principle that is assumed throughout the Old Testament that 'no one takes this honour for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was' (Heb. 5:4 ESV). Indeed in the account of Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16-17 we see the action of God's judgment falling on those who presume to take the honour of priesthood to themselves, without God's divine command. God had chosen Aaron and his line to be priests, just as much as he had prescribed the system of worship in which the priests were to serve. Those who were born into the tribe of Levi had the privilege of operating as priests to God, taking it in turns to serve at the temple, and receiving special benefits in lieu of their possession of land.

The accounts of the consecration of Aaron and his sons in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8 make it clear that the priests were carefully prepared for their tasks. Aaron and his sons were all washed in water, dressed in their specified priestly robes, and then Aaron specifically was anointed with fragrant oil. The action is taken up in the symbolism of Psalm 133, which describes the beauty of unity as being like 'the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!' (Ps. 133:2). In other words, the unity of God's people (possibly particularly in worship) is akin to the fragrant blessing and anointing of the Spirit symbolized in the anointing of the earthly leader of their worship. Thus, Jesus' baptism in water (corresponding to the washing of Aaron) and anointing with the Spirit (corresponding to Aaron's anointing with oil) indicates that he is now the new High Priest, come to offer a better sacrifice and lead his people in true worship.¹⁰ However, it also indicates something more in relationship to the theme of priesthood.

In the Old Testament there is another significant priestly figure, who features in the account of Abraham's return from the battle with the five kings in Genesis 14. Melchizedek stands as a more ancient and greater priest, but in contrast to Aaron's priestly line which continued through the Levites from one generation to the next, Melchizedek's 'line' seems to be limited to himself, at least in terms of human descent. The writer to the Hebrews describes him, however, as being the older and more abiding model of priesthood, which transcended the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood in both age and significance (Heb. 7:1-3). He predated both Aaron and the tribe of Levi, and in Abraham all subsequent lines of priesthood bowed down to Melchizedek, implicitly recognizing his superiority (Heb. 7:5-10). Thus, while there seems to be no direct continuation of Melchizedek's priesthood in functional terms (i.e. there was no earthly worship centre in which a line of his descendants operated), the fact that this priesthood antedates the Levitical priesthood by more than four hundred years and that Abraham was content to bow in worship and offer tithes is not to be ignored. It is therefore significant that Psalm 110 mentions *this* priesthood in relation to the matter of kingship in Israel, rather than the priesthood that was already functioning in accordance with the covenant made at Sinai.

Psalm 110 clearly indicates that God's anointed ruler shared in a priestly role. Of the king it is said, 'the LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"' (Ps. 110:4). Thus Weiser comments:

The psalm ... very forcefully emphasizes – the solemn way in which the divine oracle is introduced cannot be without significance here – the priesthood will forever remain vested in the king after the order of Melchizedek, that Canaanite priest-prince of Jerusalem in ancient times (cf. Gen. 14:18) who likewise combined both these offices in his one person. When David took over the Jebusite kingship of the city of Jerusalem these two offices were conferred on him and, as the psalm shows, continued to be held by the Davidic dynasty.¹¹

Thus it seems that in Israel the legitimate king of David's line was a priest, but of a different order to the priesthood which operated in the Temple. The kings were in the line of Melchizedek's priesthood, not Aaron's. This does not mean that the king in Israel was free to operate independently of the Temple and its sacrifices; but by virtue



of his special relationship with Yahweh as his adopted son and his linkage with the figure of Melchizedek in the ancient past, the king in some ways transcended the Temple and its cultus. Whether Israel (or even the king himself) fully understood it or not, he stood as testimony in Israel's midst to a different, universal order of priesthood – an order of priesthood that in itself contained the innermost meaning of the Temple worship (that God's covenant blessings were ultimately for all the nations), and to which it would at length give way.

Psalm 110 and Psalm 2 are the most quoted Psalms in the New Testament. When the New Testament writers interpret the ministry of Jesus, it is as though they use these Psalms as the lens through which they view the whole of Jesus' life and ministry, including his ascension. Whatever the original occasions of these Psalms' composition, both serve to underscore the fact that the real King of Israel is Yahweh, and that the earthly throne of Israel is occupied only by his gift to his anointed/adopted son. It became clear, however, that if ever and however these Psalms were applied to the earthly kings of Israel, their fulfillment transcended their reigns. 'With the eclipse of the Davidic dynasty the psalm [110] lived on as an expression of faith in God's ultimate fulfillment of his king-centered purposes for his people' and thus 'the great assurances of the psalm fell deep into the well of time till they finally plunged in the waters of NT revelation'.¹²

(e) Prophetic Empowerment

That the baptism/anointing of Jesus had kingship at its core is beyond doubt. There are, however, other considerations which are of some significance. We have already alluded to the fact that Jesus' baptism and temptation took place immediately before his public teaching and preaching ministry began. At the very outset of that ministry Jesus himself uses the following description: 'The Spirit of the Lord is now upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord' (Luke 4:18 NASB).

This is, of course, a quote from Isaiah 61:1ff. All of the Gospels are united on the fact that Jesus' ministry was first and foremost a ministry of proclamation. He came teaching and preaching the word of God in the power of the Spirit. He was anointed, therefore, as the

Prophet,¹³ foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15, who would teach the truth of Law to the nation and bring salvation to the Gentiles (cf. Matt. 12:18f.). Just as all the Old Testament prophets were anointed by the Spirit for their task, Jesus was likewise anointed, but in his case ‘without measure’ so that the very words he spoke were ‘spirit and life’ (John 6:63).

The baptism/anointing stands, therefore, as the public attestation of Jesus’ threefold office of King, Priest and Prophet. These, of course, cannot be isolated from one another, but they do allow us to focus on different aspects of Jesus’ life and work. The three offices are of immense importance for the matter of worship. In their Old Testament contexts, each, in its own way, was an office filled by the anointed servants of Yahweh to lead the nation in true worship and thus ensure its reception of the covenant blessings that accompany such covenant faithfulness.¹⁴

(f) Trinitarian Communion

Thus far we have concentrated on the Spirit’s anointing which took place in Jesus’ baptism for his threefold office and thus for his work as Saviour. But the anointing also has a deeply personal significance for Jesus himself, particularly as seen in its connection with the proclamation from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased.’¹⁵ That the anointing took place ‘while he was praying’ (Luke 3:21) is meaningful in this regard. The context is that of communion, of mutuality, of speaking and being heard, of listening and responding in love. It was a declaration of love by the Father, spoken in the words from heaven, and testified to in the bestowal of the Spirit. As such this was a Trinitarian event. The Father, Son and Spirit are revealed in their relationships to one another, open now for human eyes to see and ears to hear. But it is significant to note that this great Trinitarian revelation has the blessing of sinners as its ultimate goal. This event was the greatest revelation of the Trinitarian life that had ever been seen in history, and it takes place in the context of an anointing and empowering to enable the redemption of sinners (and ultimate restoration of the whole Creation under its rightful King). This was not simply the baptism of the great King, but the anointing of the Lamb of God for his sacrificial death. Jesus needed and was given the Spirit and the voice from his Father to prepare him for that terrible event.

(g) Identification with Sinners

This aspect of the baptism is underlined by Jesus' words in Matthew 3:15. In answer to John's objection to his being baptized, Jesus says, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for *us* to fulfill all righteousness' (ESV). The plural pronoun is important. By it we see that Jesus identified himself with the sinners he came to save. In Matthew 3:5f. we are told of the impact of John's ministry as 'Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the districts around the Jordan' were going out to him to be baptized in the Jordan River, 'as they confessed their sins'. John refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees, whom he characterized as a 'brood of vipers', and who did not bring forth fruit that was in keeping with repentance. Jesus, therefore, aligns himself with the repentant sinners coming to be baptized by John, whose Gospel of the Kingdom had turned their hearts away from their sins and towards the God who is Jesus' Father. But their baptism could only ever be effective on the basis of another baptism that the Son of God would undergo on the cross (Luke 12:50). This baptism into the judgment of death would be the means by which the sinners with whom he here identifies would be forgiven, and the means by which sinners would come to know God as their Father too.

(h) Personal Assurance

In the light of all these things, we must also affirm that the baptism was of enormous personal importance for Jesus. There can be no doubt that he knew the purpose for his coming into the world. On the one hand this was the redemption of sinners, but on the other it was the destruction of all the works of the devil.¹⁶ These are not two separate purposes, but one, and to be accomplished through the one cross under the empowering of the Spirit. With the reality of that cross before him, the intensity of the conflict with all the forces of evil along the way, and the ultimate descent into death itself, Jesus needed to know, at the very outset, that no matter where these things would take him, he was still the beloved of his Father. The events to come would lead him to the place of utter dereliction, and to get there, and to come through it, he needed the assurance of the Father's love. He was (and is) a man, and in his humanity he needed all the power of the presence of the Father to accomplish this new exodus for his people. In this vein Sinclair Ferguson comments that

the descent of the Spirit, and Jesus' new experience of him, serve to assure Jesus of the Father's love ... the Spirit is a Spirit of Sonship and assurance, who will bear witness with his spirit that he is the Son of God, and who will enable him, even in Gethsemane, to call God *Abba!* Father!... The Spirit thus seals and confirms the bond of love and trust between the Father and the incarnate Son.¹⁷

2. Jesus as the Second Adam and True Israel of God

Each of the areas we have spoken of above, and all of them together, serve to emphasize the fact that the whole of Jesus' life and ministry was (and is) for the sake of others. All of the offices and layers of meaning indicated above have their goal not in themselves, but for those who are thus represented in him. He is the Lamb, the Prophet, the Priest, the King and the Beloved Son whose whole life is bound up with his service to the Father for the sake of the blessing of the nations. And all of the 'for-other-ness' of Jesus' life hinges upon his worship. He is shown to be both the true man, of Adam's line, and the true (faithful) Israel of God. In terms of biblical theology, these two great figures, Adam and Israel, stand as testimonies both to God's gracious faithfulness and to the tragedy of disobedient sonship.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus' genealogy is placed immediately between the baptism and the temptation. In this linear genealogy Jesus' line of descent is taken all the way back to Adam, 'the son of God' (Luke 3:38). The first son, Adam, faced the temptation in the Garden. The second Adam now had to face it in the wilderness. Here he took his stand in and under the conditions of the curse that the first Adam's disobedience had occasioned. Where the first had failed in the midst of plenty, would the second succeed in the midst of deprivation? In hunger and want, in the wilderness state of creation that was brought about through the curse of the first Adam's failure, would he himself fail to obey the word of God his Father?

In Matthew's Gospel we see a slightly different, though not contradictory, emphasis. Where Luke's genealogy ends with Adam, Matthew's begins with Abraham, and draws particular attention to David as Abraham's descendant (Matt. 1:1-16). As the seed of Abraham, via David, Jesus stands as the representative of Israel, and its true King. Thus Matthew gives us an account of Jesus' period of refuge in Egypt (Matt. 2:13ff.), the meaning of which is given: 'so that the prophecy might be fulfilled, Out of Egypt did I call my son.' Israel had been chosen by Yahweh to be a royal priesthood in the



midst of the nations. This calling, which they abrogated, would now be taken up in this new Son, who is a King Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. Would he fail like Israel, who resisted/grieved the Spirit in the wilderness (Isa. 63:10 cf. Acts 7:51-53)? Would he repeat their sin in refusing to hear and obey the voice of God (Deut. 6:1-9 cf. 2 Kings 17:13-15)? Or would he prove himself to be a faithful Son in contrast to Israel's constant rebelliousness? In short, would he live for himself, or for his Father?

3. The Temptation: General Considerations

'The temptation is an inevitable and significant concomitant phenomenon of the wilderness. Of all the side themes of the wilderness tradition, both in the Old and New Testament, it is the most frequent one.'¹⁸ In the wilderness, all that was affirmed personally to Jesus and publicly of Jesus was tested in the depths of his own physical, spiritual and emotional life. We cannot begin to estimate the intensity of the hunger pains he suffered, or the physical extremity to which this severe period of testing brought him, except that we are told in Matthew 4:11 that at the end of the ordeal 'angels came to minister to him'. The only other occasion where such a statement is made is in Luke's account of Gethsemane, where at the end of that terrible trial 'an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him' (Luke 22:43).¹⁹ For Jesus, the temptation in the wilderness was every bit as demanding as the depths of Gethsemane. It took him to the uttermost limits of endurance in every aspect of his humanity: physically, emotionally and spiritually.

It is clear that Jesus had been anointed by the Father with the Spirit for the vocation ahead of him, but the first great work of the Spirit in this phase of his life was to take him to the very brink of human endurance in the wilderness, there to face the evil one head on. The confrontation with the devil was no accident, but rather the express purpose of the Spirit's leading.²⁰ Here, at the point of human extremity, would he trust and obey the Word of God?²¹

The repeated phrase in Matthew's account 'If you are the Son of God ...' highlights the nature of the temptation.²² Just as Adam (the son in the Garden) and Israel (the son in the wilderness) were tested in their obedience, so was the Son tested in his obedience to the Father's word. Would his messianic mission be accomplished according to his own understanding, or according to his Father's? Would he serve

himself, or serve the One who had sent him, even if at the point of his deepest physical hunger that One seemed not to be near him?

4. The Temptation and Worship

Standing at the centre of the account in Luke and the culmination of the account in Matthew is the express issue of worship. In Matthew the exchange is reported like this:

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve"' (Matt. 4:8-10, ESV)

The 'very high mountain' is not a literal topographical feature (a mountain from which one can see the whole earth is impossible), but the Satanic parody of the mountain of revelation, seen throughout the Scriptures.²³ Here he offers to Jesus that which has already been promised to him by the Father, as the Messianic King.²⁴ The implicit question is whether he would obtain the inheritance and its glory by worshipping Satan or by worshipping God. It was precisely here that both Adam and Israel failed. 'As in the very first account of testing, failed by Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1-7), the question centres on a choice between the will of Satan and the will of God, which involves implicitly the rendering of worship to one or the other'.²⁵ Would Jesus, by outward obeisance or inward attitude of heart, give way to the worship of Satan, thus breaking the first commandment? Would he thus repeat Israel's sin and become bound to the power of the idols, behind whom Satan stands?²⁶

In seeking to be worshipped, Satan's ploy was to bring the Son captive to himself. The issue of worship was not (and is not) a peripheral issue in the life of the Son of God, but lies at its very core. It is the key on which all hinges, not just for his own sake, but for the sake of the whole of the creation. All of Jesus' life was an expression of his worship to God his Father as he served him in thought, word and deed, and ultimately as he set the captives free from Satan's power through his sacrificial death.

In promising Jesus the kingdoms of this world in exchange for his worship, Satan was offering a path 'that side stepped the cross and introduced idolatry'.²⁷ He sought at the very outset to corrupt the



holy principle of Jesus' life, as expressed in the first commandment, that he would have no other gods than his Father in heaven. This being the case, Jesus would have no divided allegiance, no other focus of his obedience and no other object of his affections. He would love that which his Father loved, and hate that which he hated, and worship him in the doing of his will to the uttermost – with all his heart and soul and mind and strength.

It is for this reason that Jesus' response to the temptations is in and through the word of God. He does not quote the Scriptures as some sort of talisman, but uses them to express his *active obedience* to that word. It is this active obedience which gives him the power to resist the evil one and which enables him to prevail. He stands here, anointed by the Spirit as the representative head of a new humanity, as its champion on the field of battle. This humanity will not be free until it is free to worship 'in Spirit and in truth', and such freedom can only come about through Jesus' own worship – such worship and service ultimately being expressed to the point of death on the Cross.

We should not interpret Jesus' dismissal of the temptations by the word of God in any perfunctory manner, as though Jesus was just quoting texts as ammunition. To dismiss these temptations with the word of God was at the same time to choose actively the way of the Cross. It was to take up the full burden of responsibility involved in the fact that the Son did not come down from heaven to live for himself, but to die for others. Where the first Adam failed and brought the tyranny of false worship to the race, the obedient worship of the second Adam would lead a new humanity to the liberating glory of the worship for which it was created.

5. Conclusion

The foregoing brief discussion makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the one who enables true worship, and the one who redeems human beings from the curse of false worship. The battle at the very outset of his public ministry recapitulated that of Adam and Israel, and revolved around his own worship of God for the sake of others. This worship affected and informed every aspect of his life. When we speak of 'worship' then, we are not speaking about *an* activity of one's life, but speaking of *the* activity of one's life, which gives that life its entire focus and direction. It is a core orientation rather than a peripheral action.