

On The Way to Jesus pt 7
The Religious life of the Nation

If you missed the first three weeks, then let me tell you what we're doing in this series. We are looking at the Big Story of Jesus that is woven throughout all of the bible.

HOW IMPORTANT IS "RELIGION" IN YOUR LIFE?
"very important to you?"

<https://nypost.com/2023/03/27/values-like-patriotism-religion-falling-out-of-favor-among-americans-poll/>

- Religion 1998-2023 decline from 62% to 39%
- decline of importance of religion; spike in money 31% to 43%)

The Judeo- Christian is built around a God CENTERED LIFE OF FAITH AND WORSHIP , and we see that clearly in the 'religious' life of Israel as prescribed in the OT.

During the early monarchy, Israel's devotional life flourishes in psalms and wisdom writings.

The religious life is summarized by the idea of "Practicing the Presence of God" or "Living Life before the Face of God" in all areas of life.

An awareness of the presence of God and living in reverence of "fear of the LORD" is at the root of OT piety.
The height of blessedness was having God's face shine upon you.

The religious life of the nation was a God focused living faith which was deeply personal, Word centered, intentionally corporate grateful worship. OT piety was a complete worldview and way of life.

Deut 6

4 "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

** Parents, the best complaint you can hear from your kids is this, "Dad/mom, do you have to bring God into everything?"YES

EX: Tevya – Fiddler on the Roof – His day – work, marriage, family, etc is a running conversation with God. And as we see in the Psalms, sometimes he is joyful and thankful; sometimes he is despairing and questioning.

God FOCUSED

The nature, character and attributes of God were regularly proclaimed and rehearsed. And this personal God was understood to be omnipresent and engaged with His people.

Ps 139

1 O Lord, You have searched me and known me.
2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;

You understand my thought from afar.
3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.
4 Even before there is a word on my tongue,
Behold, O Lord, You know it all. ...
...7 Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
9 If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
10 Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
---23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.

Ps 42 shows a self-righting principle from the Word

EX: like with a Kayak

5 Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence.

Stop listening to yourself and preach God News to yourself

The religious life of the nation was a God focused living faith which was deeply personal, Word centered, intentionally corporate grateful worship. OT piety was a complete worldview and way of life.

While there are many ways in which we feel cut off from our Jewish roots, there remains a strong connection through the worship / religious oriented texts of the Psalms and Proverbs.

If you ask the average church goers to name their favorite book of the OT, you are likely to get the answer – “Psalms”. They are the heart and soul of the religious expression for so many of us. They were given for that purpose. They represent the cry of the heart.

Beginning with Psalm 1 and ending with Psalm 150, the Psalms give an overview and an in-depth look at the hearts of those seeking to walk faithfully with God.

A living Faith

This is a faith guided by the Word of Yahweh.

It is a way of life that compares and contrasts two paths- the path of wisdom and the path of folly
It is a life of FAITH IN God WHO HAS REVEALED HIMSELF. He has graciously given His word and instruction on how to live in wisdom – the path of flourishing.

PSALM 1;

1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.
3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.
6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

We're all on one of those paths – wisdom or folly. There is no neutral ground.

Prov 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

“The fear of God” was an overarching concept in the OT that produced obedience through trust in God’s promises. This fear or reverence was a guiding principle for every aspect of life.

1 Pet 1:17 carries this into the lives of the NT saints, “If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;”

Abraham, the father of the faithful set the tone for those who believed the promises of God.

Gen 15:6 Then Abraham believed in Yahweh; and He credited to him as righteousness.

This concept of righteousness by faith is so crucial that it was repeated in Rom 4; Gal 3; James 2

Heb 11 is the Hall of Faith that commends the faith exploits of many of the OT saints.

Their faith and worldview were guided by scripture

Josh 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

PSALM 19:7 The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

True OT religious piety was evidenced by how the people lived out their faith, not merely by what they professed.

Matt 15:

7 You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:

8 ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.

9 But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ ”

One clear concept of OT RELIGION is that as people, we WILL WORSHIP something. We are hard wired spiritually to worship because we are made in the image of God.

All cultures manifest some form of worship – “You gotta serve somebody” – Bob Dylan

Eccles 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts.

If we don’t worship the Creator, we will worship something, even if man-made idols...like the gods of the nations... Ps 115

4 Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man’s hands.

5 They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see;

6 They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell;

7 They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk;

They cannot make a sound with their throat.

8 Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them.

We become like what we worship.

We have a TV show called “American IDOL” WHAT DO YOU WORSHIP? What would those who know you say?

Pursuing Yahweh means that we would become like Yahweh – loving what He loves as we seek to do what He requires of us.

Micah 6:8

**8 He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?**

There are real world implications of Biblical religion as it is lived out in our lives, families, work, and worship.

DEEPLY PERSONAL

PS 23 – Yahweh is MY shepherd, I shall not want.

Ps 73:25-26

**25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

INTENTIONALLY CORPORATE

Ps 122

1 I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.”

Psalm 22:22 I will tell of Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

**23 You who fear the Lord, praise Him;
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel.**

Ps 133

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!

*** Intentional corporate worship and life in community was a strength that held God’s people together in ancient Israel. It has done so for the Jewish community throughout history, and it is an important part of a healthy Christian life.

It is needed now more than ever as a recent report from the US Surgeon General has declared that American is experiencing an epidemic of loneliness.

<https://albertmohler.com/2023/05/03/briefing-5-3-23>

As summer approaches, beware the mindset that says, “We’ll just take the summer off from worship or other spiritual practices.”

We are relational people because we are made in the image of God who is relational within Himself – One God in three persons is at the core of Biblical faith.

DON’T FORGET THE HALLELUJAH FACTOR

Joyful grateful thanksgiving is one of the most repeated exhortations in scripture – OT and NT.

Biblical worship is to be characterized by praise and thanksgiving.

There are numerous words that describe praise – be joyful, give thanks, bless, praise, etc

Ps 100

**1 Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.
2 Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing.
3 Know that the Lord Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise.**

Give thanks to Him, bless His name.
5 For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting
And His faithfulness to all generations.

PSALM 150

If the Psalmists were to walk into most churches, would they even recognize the atmosphere?
They would speak English, but would they see joy? Would they pick up on praise?

Or would they see folks who look like they were weaned on lemon juice?
Would they see people who were living in the presence of a gracious glorious God or people who were living with Eeyore?

OTWTJ

The reality of this God focused deeply personal, Word centered, intentionally corporate grateful worship is **SOMEONE WE MEET** before it is something we do.

Jesus is the embodiment of OT piety and worship. He was consumed by zeal for His Father's house. He often went away to pray. His work was to fulfill what the Father had given Him to do. He knew what it was to live, not by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Jesus is the incarnate Word, and we grow by abiding in Him since He is the Vine and apart from Him we can do NOTHING.

The same Spirit that animated Christ lives in each believer.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.
Romans 8

When we walk by the Spirit, we'll love what Jesus loved and by his Spirit we'll be transformed into the description of THE FAITHFUL WORSHIPPING BELIEVER IN Psalm 1-

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.
3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

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10. Religious Life of the Nation

During the early monarchy, Israel's devotional life flourishes in psalms and wisdom writings.

- Psalm 1 (Two ways to live)
- Psalm 22 (David's lament)
- Psalm 51 (Repentance for sin)
- Psalm 72 (Prayer for the king)
- Psalm 118 ("Blessed is he who comes")
- Proverbs 1-2 (Wisdom and fear of the Lord)
- Proverbs 8 (Praise of Wisdom)
- Ecclesiastes 1 ("Vanity of vanities . . .")
- Ecclesiastes 12 (Fear God)
- Song of Songs 1 (Goodness of marital love)