

True Worship and False Worship

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Introduction

“I love this fruit!” “I love this car!” “I love this program!” “I Love this song!” The list of loved or “adored” things is quite extensive. Sometimes I hear phrases like that out there, how about you? Are all these things of our choosing really worthy of worship? Certainly not. But, wait a minute! Not even?

For some not really, because they know that we can at least like these things, and not worship them as we often say with a mouth full of satisfaction and eyes full of desire.

Worship. Do you know what this is? Or say in relation to your preferences without giving much importance to the meaning of the word? Can we really love things we like a lot? Or is worship a more serious term applied only to divinity?

The implications of this verb go much deeper than is generally thought and used in everyday vocabulary. Who are we really worshipping? Who or what deserves and does receive our most devoted services?

Through this book I want to propose a reflection on the types of worship that are practiced today. Many who claim to be even worshipping correctly may be mistaken.

I don’t want to put myself as a judge of anyone, to point out this or that who is lost by worshipping wrongly, or worshipping something wrong, or a being that he doesn’t even know. I just want to take you to a reflection on that. Therefore, this book is not an end in itself, but just a tool to help you worship wisely.

The feeling of devotion is latent within the human being. This feeling is channeled to the most diverse directions, leading the worshiper, to a certain extent, to surrender himself to a determined devotion.

The devotion of some is for football, the devotion of others may be for the body, the cult of the body. To another, the

devotion may be for money, the worship of Mammon (Mt 6:24; Luke 16:13). The devotion to spirits, for instance, the cult of orixás, to the childrens, why not to say these beings, who often gain gigantic dimensions in the paternal or maternal esteem.

The list can be endless and even bizarre. I once watched a report about a sect that worshiped the vagina, that's right, a sect with participants who met in the woods and with rituals in circles, worshiped the vagina in a collective and mystical ritual.

Perhaps you may be surprised, but this and many other behaviors, from the most casual and random ones such as the way we behave towards a child or anyone else, and also situations less common to our perception as rituals with cult of prostitution are older than we think.

Even the male sexual organ has its cult festival with the right to a procession where the most varied sculptures of the phallic member are displayed in huge processions.

This may sound offensive or even comical to some people, but forms of cult and worshipping are the most primitive and varied customs in human existence.

The purpose of this book is not to delve into these issues, but to present within the biblical account the existence and differences between true and false worship. Does the God of love and the God who is love accept any form of worship? This is what we are going to reflect on.

Chapter 1

The altar and its contents

“What matters is your heart.” This is the phrase that many people declare in justification for their way of worshipping God. Was that sentence one hundred percent correct?

Well, the Bible says that the heart of man is not trustworthy, because he is corrupt and deceitful (Jer 17:9), how then do we base true worship based on our hearts, or where we feel good, or in the famous “I think”?

We need to understand that our heart is very important to God, because He Himself tells us: “Give me my son your heart ...” However, that is not all He asks for in this biblical text. Then He says: “... and let your eyes observe my ways.” (Proverbs 23:26). What is it to observe the ways of the Lord?

In the first sacred pages we read a story that illustrates very well what it means to observe the ways of the Lord. It is the story of Cain and Abel, the first two children of Adam and Eve.

The Bible tells us that God was pleased with Abel’s offering, but with the offer of his older brother, Cain, God was not pleased. Perhaps many think: why did God accept one and not the other? What matters is not the heart?

Remember: God wants our heart and that we observe his ways. This means that when we give our heart to God, we will not keep it for ourselves, that is, our will and what we prefer will have no supremacy. We will observe the ways of the Lord and not our own ways, that is, we will walk in the ways that God wants us to walk and not in the ways that we prefer.

Cain offered what he most appreciated: the fruits of the land. Perhaps he had enormous and plausible justifications for not offering an innocent little sheep. Perhaps he could think, “How cruel it is to take the life of this helpless little animal.”

But the death of that little animal represented the sacrifice to which the Son of God would submit to save the human race from eternal perdition. Nowadays many people can present humanly plausible justifications for defending their way of worshiping God. But the big question is: does God accept?

What am I putting on the altar? That is the big question that we must ask ourselves. Am I putting what God accepts or what I choose?

We always need to ask ourselves these questions, because in a time of relativity like the one we live in, where people often say: “Ah, we don’t need to be that radical! God is not that severe, God is love.” We are often sculpting a “god” according to our own preferences, and not worshiping a supreme God, who is above our will.

But what you put on the altar has nothing to do with money, it is much more than that. Today we live under the influence of the theology of prosperity, where shepherds do prosper more than the sheeps, where sheeps are extorted in their wool and fat, leaving them almost to die by emaciation, while shepherds are growing fat at their expense (Eze 34:2-3).

This phrase can be misused by prosperity theologians, and misrepresented as follows: “Put everything on the altar that God will give you twice.” But the big question is: which altar?

We are not talking about the altar of denomination A, B or C. No, the altar is invisible. It is not the platform of a physical temple, it is not an altar of stones like those of the patriarchal era, as this has already been abolished with the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross of Calvary. We are talking about the altar of God’s will, what is acceptable to Him.

The problem is that we are not always willing to put what God asks for on the altar. For human convenience it is more comfortable to deliver things that are apparently more coherent. Is it or is it not true?

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Which of us, in human logic, would prefer to offer the murder of an innocent little sheep, to a beautiful and juicy basket of large and shiny fruits?

This story is repeated today with an incredible resemblance! Many today are offering things to God that are apparently the best, but not those that please God. And many who are offering to God what they please, fall into the displeasure of the “brothers” who do the opposite.

Cain and Abel were blood brothers. But today, some apparent brothers of faith are in opposite directions with regard to the exercise of religious faith.

Who’s right? This is an intriguing and challenging question. Many believe that all roads lead to God, just as all roads lead to Rome. Was that thought correct? From the story of Cain and Abel we can know that it is not, and also from other stories that we will see later.

If one brother acts in one way, and the other acts in another, and both claim to be doing God’s will, who is really right?

The Bible, I believe, can help us in this regard, not only with their stories, like that of Cain and Abel, but also with their rules of conduct, practiced by real people.

But we can also learn from those who disobeyed, so that we don’t follow their example and suffer the same consequences that hit them. In any case, in the end, the choice will always be ours.

Chapter 2

When routine is fatal

Imagine a life of sacrifice. Maybe you thought of a person who went through a lot of difficulties, but no! This is not what I want you to imagine. Think of a person who wherever he went he left evidence of the sacrifices he made, that is, altars, built with stones, one on top of the other.

Abel was not the only one who worshiped God by offering sheep for a burnt offering. Abraham was also a God-fearing man who worshiped Him following the way specified by God to worship Him and not his own way.

He was so faithful to God and so methodical as to this custom, that he always erected an altar on his journey to worship and offer burnt offerings to his God, wherever he camped as a nomad.

And here we have an important lesson to learn: we need to create good worship habits. Do what God requires of us, even if it needs to be done constantly, wherever we go.

But, what about when the routine becomes dangerous? When it loses its meaning. When we do it just for the sake of it, when we do just for mere formality. In such cases, we need to pay attention and do a self-analysis to see if we are in the faith (2 Cor 13:5).

Worshiping God purely and simply out of habit, as many do, is not true worship, but just routine worship. Routine worship can be true when it is done repetitively, but from the heart.

However, when it is done only mechanically, without being by body and soul, it becomes dangerous, as they keep the worshiper in a state of insensitivity, of doing for the sake of doing, but not doing from love.

And that in the eyes of God is the same as nothing.

When routine is fatal

A great prophet of God protested this attitude in the following terms:

“For the Lord said, For this people draw near me, and with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men.” Isaiah 29:13.

This attitude is so dangerous that Jesus realized that the same was true of the religious of his time and used the text of Isaiah to rebuke them in the same way:

“Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Matthew 15:7-9.

Do you know that you can be in that situation without even realizing it? Think of everything you’ve learned as the right thing to do. Have you ever thought that all this can only be things that you have learned automatically? It is a complex problem for two reasons: You may be practicing the right, in a purely routine manner, or the wrong, also routinely.

But maybe that doesn’t bother you, because you think God accepts you anyway. Remember what we saw at the beginning: God wants not only our hearts, but that our eyes observe his ways (23:26). Abraham knew and observed the ways of God. However, even Abraham was tested in his worshiping routine, because one day God asked him for something totally out of his routine. Much more than that, God asked him to do something totally absurd, to sacrifice his own son (Gn 22:2).

Have you ever wondered if one day God asked you for something that deviates from your standards of what you believe to be true worship? You may think that what God asks of you may be false worship, something totally absurd, just as it was for Abraham, but, would you be willing to do it anyway?

If you are a Christian, with a certain biblical knowledge, you know that Abraham obeyed, and you also know what the

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consequences were. However, if you do not know the story, I tell you that this was a test to which God submitted Abraham, to see if he loved his son, the son of his old age, the only son, more than God (Gn 22:12).

What about us? Whom do we love the most? Our mother? Dad? Son? Daughter? Spouse? Are any of these people, or is any possession, occupying the place that God should occupy in our hearts? Do you understand now why worshipping goes much further than religious routines? Worship affects all aspects of life. And we can make the mistake of believing that we are truly worshipping God when we may be merely observers of religious rites.

What would you do if God asked for something that escapes the rites I'm used to? This is the serious question we should all be asking at one time or another in our lives. Perhaps this book will lead us to answer that question in one way or another. And I hope it will lead to a satisfactory answer, even if it goes against some standards. The great truth is that in order to worship God it is necessary to be willing to do what He asks of us, even if it seems strange to our eyes and to the eyes of the whole society in which we live.

Imagine if God asked you to review your concepts of what it means to be a true worshiper. Is what He wants from you what your religious leader wants from you? Does worshipping Him is to follow a religious booklet according to the denomination you are a member of? Why the same God who asked Abraham to sacrifice sheeps said to other people, in other circumstances: "For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings", Hosea 6:6?

Sometimes God asks us for something that we are not very willing to do. Remember Cain? What was wrong with offering a beautiful fruit basket? Perhaps something that is good in your eyes is not exactly what God is asking for, not that it is totally bad or disposable.

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Hadn't God asked for burnt offerings? Why then did He say He wanted mercy and not burnt offerings? You may be tempted to think: Doesn't God know what He wants? No, God knows exactly what He wants and gives us clear instructions about it.

The problem is when we do what God wants for the wrong reasons, with the wrong intentions, and we do it in half, in an incomplete and merely casual way. What is the use of making sacrifices to God without mercy for others? What is the use of attending religious services without loving and helping those in need?

Do you realize that worship can only be an appearance of godliness, but the denial of the power of practical godliness (2 Timothy 3:5), the godliness that brings about change? Therefore, on the day of reckoning, Jesus will tell many who appeared to be true worshipers:

“Not everyone who says to me: Lord, Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And, in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonders? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity.” Matthew 7:21-23.

I hope that neither I nor you who are reading or hearing me at this moment are among those. But, as we have seen, there will not be few, but many who will experience this painful disappointment. Once again we realize, from the sacred pages, and from the instructions of our Savior, that it is not enough just to belong to a religion that takes the name of the Lord on its lips and speaks it out loud, it is not enough to do things apparently by power of Christ and in his name. True worship goes far beyond that, as we have seen and will continue to see in the following pages.

Chapter 3

Changes for good and for evil

“I order this disease to come out of you now in the name of Jesus!” Have you ever heard phrases like that? Perhaps, who knows, you even uttered them with some success, that is, leading the person to be healed or whatever else you have asked for in your prayer. The fact that this has happened does not mean that you are practicing true worship, or even if you are, that it will continue for a long time.

I will explain why. In the Bible we find a story of a king who tried to implement in his reign a false system of worship to compete with that of a rival king (1 Kings 12:26-33).

This story is repeated today every time new religious denominations are opened in order to attract the “faithful” who are gathered in their domains.

When the king of our history, Jeroboam, ordered the manufacture of two golden calves and placed them in two different cities in his territory, he had the intention of preventing the people from going to Jerusalem, to worship in the Temple.

He was afraid that the people would become a vassal of the other king again, so he induced the people to worship those golden calves by arguing with them that it would be too much trouble to have to go up to Jerusalem for the annual worship festivals.

Nowadays what’s going on? There are many arguments used to practice proselytism. Many say: “Come to our church, God is here, God works in our midst, God works wonders here.” And the list of reasons for someone to start attending that denomination is huge.

Jeroboam’s tactic worked in its time, and it continues to work today. But the question is: until when? How long will the methods used to fill modern temples continue to be successful?

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Nowadays, modern religious denominations have enjoyed a certain prestige. It is difficult to see any church fail, is not it? It is practically impossible. Each has continued to function, but what kind of worship has it taught and practiced?

Jeroboam's success was much shorter than that of modern religions, for God sent a man to frustrate his hopes of instituting his false worship (1 Kings 13:1-10).

History tells us that this man, charged with rebuking King Jeroboam, arrived in one of those cities where one of those golden calves was, and cried out against the altar on which the king would burn incense, uttering condemnation and destruction against that altar and all the false priests who would appear after those who were initiating a false system of worship.

Wow!! What courage! Have you thought? A man sent by God to speak harsh words of condemnation and destruction against that false system of worship in front of the very king who had instituted it. It takes a lot of courage for that, doesn't it?

That man, sent by God, had that courage. Would you have the courage today to denounce a false system of worship, even if it was necessary to do so in the presence of kings and authorities? We know that the Bible directs us to respect the instituted authorities (Romans 13:1), but it also directs us to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). When what the authorities ask of us shock itself directly against what God asks of us, we need to make a courageous choice, even at risk of the consequences.

The man in our history was courageous, and at one time or another we also need, to a certain degree, to be courageous and to position ourselves before the types of worship that have been practiced today, despite the difficulties ahead.

Perhaps you think: but what more absurd idea, to worship golden calves? The Hebrew people, recently freed from Egyptian slavery, had also succumbed to this false worship, and in one of the most important moments: the delivery of the ten commandments. From these events we realized that at that time

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the worship of golden calves was a tradition and even a very common form of worship, to the point of leading them to give in to this type of worship.

Today we live in different times, no one in their right mind will let themselves be carried away by this false system of worship. Notwithstanding, we are not immune to other systems of worship that are also wrong.

The man God sent to rebuke and condemn the false system of worship imposed by King Jeroboam did not have an easy life in his mission. When he protested against the altar and, by the power of God given to that man, the altar broke in half, the king ordered him to be arrested.

What would you do if any authority ordered your arrest for carrying out God's order to condemn false worship? Would you have the confidence that the man in our history had? On that occasion he was not arrested, but as we know, other men of God were arrested (Acts 16:19-25; Acts 12:1-11; Revelation 2:10) and even killed (Matthew 14:10; Acts 12:1-2; 7:54-60) for fulfilling divine order proclaiming the truth of God and/or condemning the false worship practiced in his days.

But the man of God in this history was not killed by the king. On the contrary, when the king extended his arm pointing at him, so that to arrest him, God made the king's arm to be as hard as a stone, unable to bend down. This tells us that that man really was a servant of God, because all these miraculous signs happened in his presence.

But that is not all that this story suggests to us. In it we see that the same God who heals is the God who weakens. Not that all illnesses and physical disabilities happen because God wants to, because we know that there is an enemy that promotes the physical, mental and spiritual diseases that exist. However, the devil cannot cause harm beyond God's permission (Job 2:1-10). We have a limited enemy, however much he wants our evil (1 Peter 5:8).

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When that man of God transmitted the prophecies against that altar and against a whole generation of false worshipers, neither the king nor anyone there was able to do anything against him. On the contrary, the man of God who, by divine power, destroyed the altar only with a verbal order, also hardened the arm of the vile and idolatrous king.

Seeing that there was nothing he could do against that man, and witnessing the miraculous manifestations of power that accompanied his words, King Jeroboam then, terrified and impotent, asked the man to plead with God for the restitution of his arm, which it happened after the prayer of the man sent by God.

This shows us that God is not only justice, but also mercy. However, there is another lesson that we need to learn from this story. All those who are instituting a false system of worship will one day be punished by God and with no hope of restoration, not just in the arm. You may be concerned about this, but I hope that by the end of the reading you will understand what I say, as this is very important.

If our story stopped here it would be very good, wouldn't it? Perhaps, who knows, with the conversion of the king, worshiping the true God, perhaps, who knows, with the destruction of the golden calves and the extinction of idolatry in Israel. But none of this happened, nor did the man of God maintain his obedience to what God had asked of him. This is a warning to all of us today.

The king invited the man of God to come to his home, to rest, perhaps who knows, maybe even be more friendly with him so that what he didn't get by force, he could with friendship, after all, many follow that saying about an enemy: "if you cannot against him, join to him".

The king even wanted to give a gift to the man of God! But the man of God did not yield. God had asked him not to stay with anyone in that place, or to eat or drink with any of them. Then, our fearless personage, that the Bible does not have a

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name, said that even if the king gave him half of the goods he would go to the king's house, because God had forbidden him to eat and drink there, and even return for the same way, he should go through another way to go. So he said goodbye to the king and left.

However, as always, if the enemy of souls cannot destroy us in one way, he will always try in another that seems more convincing, and that is what he did with our nameless personage, but a fearless servant of God. Do not forget, God acted powerfully through him. If you didn't read, read the story of this fearless man (1 Kings 13:1-10).

How did the enemy of souls lead this man to perdition? Using another man who apparently spoke for God. That's right, not long after all his victory over the previous temptation, to resist King Jeroboam's request, with a tempting proposal for a gift, that man, who was a man of God (1 Kings 13:1), gave in to another man, whom he did not even know, with a request similar to that of the king, but without any promise of gift.

History takes a very tragic turn from then on (1 Kings 13: 11-34), because the man we said, who apparently spoke for God, managed to convince the man of God to go home to eat bread, saying that he was a prophet like him, and that an angel of God had appeared to him and said that he could go with him.

It is here that a great danger lurks, dear readers, that many have ignored, as well as that fearless man of God. You have heard the religious jargon: "The Lord has revealed to me ..." Many have fallen into this trap, and the end has been tragic, like that of the man of God.

We should at least think: Is God a man to change his mind? (Numbers 23:19). However, some imagine that He changes his mind, that he asked his servants of the past for something and today he no longer demands the same. It is true that some things that God asked for, such as the sacrifice of lambs he no longer asks for today, but we need to be very careful about what God really wants from us as worshipers, because we

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may be disregarding something that still has validity in our days, but we think God doesn't want us to practice anymore. We will talk about this later.

That man of God was deceived into believing that the stranger who told him that an angel had told him that he could return was a trustworthy person. How many today do not make the same mistake? They are going backwards thinking that God has allowed them to do so.

And now I want to make a very frank request to you, dear reader: do not believe the content of this book without searching the Scriptures and praying to God for the answer to know if its content is reliable. I don't want to deceive you, but I can incur the failure, if I am boastful and self-confident, to make mistakes and mislead you, but I would never want that to happen.

That noble man went back on what God had asked of him. What about us? Have we stepped back? Have we been relaxing like that man did, resting and thinking he had his mission accomplished? (1 Kings 13:14). These are questions that we must answer at one time or another in our lives.

The man of God who had protested against the false altar stopped on the way and sat under an oak. Are you sitting on the bench of your religious denomination thinking you are already saved, thinking that you have defeated the devil several times, that you have won many victories and now rest in false security? Be careful, very careful!

While the two men of God, two prophets, were sitting there at the table, eating quietly, divine judgment came through the mouth of the liar against what he had returned to eat at his home.

The text says:

“Because you were rebellious to the order of the Lord, and did not keep the commandment that the Lord your God had sent you, but returned, and ate bread and drank water in the place that the Lord said to you, ‘You shall not eat bread or drink water;

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your corpse will not enter your parents' tomb." 1 Kings 13:21-22.

The story goes that the disobedient prophet, after eating and drinking, rode away on his donkey, but a lion found him on the way and killed him, thus fulfilling the prophecy of the old prophet, which God had spoken by his mouth.

This story is really intriguing and teaches us current and hard lessons. The old prophet had his mouth used by the devil, the father of lies (John 8:44) by lying to the other prophet and causing him to return, but he also had his mouth used by God to prophesy the death of the rebellious man of God to the word of the LORD. This story is not uncommon in the Bible. Balaam was another prophet who pronounced blessings from God (Numbers 22-24), but he also gave depraved counsel for the destruction of the people God had blessed using his mouth (Numbers 31:16; 2 Peter 2:14-16; Rev 2:14).

Today, it is not difficult to do the same, as many men are serving God with a divided heart, loving their own appetite more, having their stomachs for God (Philippians 3:19), loving comfort and personal satisfaction, just like that man of God who came back to eat bread at the old prophet's house.

Perhaps you can think: what harm is there in eating bread? What harm is there in resting a little, in relaxing? Beware of the comfort zone, it is more dangerous than we imagine, that feeling that "I am rich and wealthy and I don't need anything else..." (Rev 3:17) is treacherous and fatal.

The feeling of once saved, saved forever has led many so-called Christians to find themselves guaranteed in eternity, just as that man of God considered himself with the mission accomplished.

When we return to the beginning of the story we are surprised that the wicked and idolatrous king did not die for his sins, but the man of God who rebuked him died for something apparently less offensive. How to understand these things? We

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will all be judged according to our responsibilities and the degree of exposure and influence of our actions to others.

Imagine King Jeroboam saying to the prophet: you didn't eat at my house, did you? But in the old prophet's house you ate! Didn't you say that God didn't allow you to eat or drink anything here? Why did you agree to go to his house?

It seems like a childish argument doesn't it? Did this alone cause the death of a fearless man of God? The question is much deeper, what caused the death of the man of God was his disobedience to the word of the Lord. Why were Adam and Eve expelled from paradise and subject to death? Simply because they ate some fruit? No, because they disobeyed God. And God warned them both: Adam and Eve, as well as the prophet.

Know that God will not punish anyone without first having fully informed him of his will and the way of life. The gospel that extols only the love of God and not his justice is a lame, deficient, false gospel. Do not believe in men who can even speak the truth sometimes, speak words that will make you cry with emotion, apparently bring you close to God, but that will mix up disguised lies to make you retreat, just like the old prophet.

You have heard the saying: "so-and-so is an old monkey (that is, he is a rogue)" The world is full of "old prophets", and why not say "old prophetesses" people prepared to deceive, to pluck not only their money, but also their life, their eternal life. Do not fall for it, even if you hear strongly convincing things with the label: "the Lord has revealed to me ...".

That man of God who prophesied against Jeroboam and the false altars passed the first test, but failed the second. What about you? And I? How have we behaved in life's tests? Would we have celebrated the victory before the end of the journey? We are resting before finishing the tour, or are we oblivious to everything, thinking that the victory is already won?

See this timely warning from the Lord, who tells us:

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“When a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises in the midst of you, and gives you a sign or prodigy, and that sign or prodigy happens, that he has spoken to you, saying: Let us go after other gods, whom you have not known, and let us serve them; you will not hear the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams; because the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. After the Lord your God you will walk, and you will fear Him, and keep His commandments, and you will hear His voice, and you will serve Him, and you will be close to Him”. Deut. 13:1-4.

Many in our time have been led astray by “old prophets” to disobey God’s commandments and to follow “gods” who shouldn’t. And why is it so? Because they do not seek for themselves to know the will of God through His Word, but depend on “old prophets” as to what they think is the will of God.

I cannot say that the old prophet died at the end of his life, just as I cannot say that the prophet who listened to him was also lost. The judgment to God belongs. But one thing we need to know, and if we already know, to reflect more and more: it is not encouraging to die in disobedience to the word God.

Jeroboam didn’t care about that. After hearing terrible prophecies, witnessing the false altar split and its ashes fall to the ground, feeling divine punishment on his skin with his hardened arm, and seeing that the same God can heal, even after all these manifestations he did not repent. He continued with his false system of worship. What about you? Would you continue if you found out that your worship system is false and its days are numbered? I hope that by the end of this reading you will know what to answer for yourself, and that the answer will be the best possible for yourself.

What is certain is that the lost will also not repent when they are receiving their harsh punishments, just as Jeroboam did not repent after being rebuked and punished (Rev 9:21; 16:9,

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11). King Jeroboam's story continued as depraved and idolatrous as it had begun. He constituted whomever he wanted as a priest of his false system of worship (2 Chronicles 11:14-15). Although his false cult system was perpetuated for many years, this was the cause of the total extinction of his descendants from the face of the earth (1 Kings 13:33-34).

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After the division of the kingdom between Judah (Rehoboam) and Israel (Jeroboam) things did not improve in worship in Israel. The story we reflected on in the previous chapter was a milestone in the division of the kingdom. As we have seen, worship in Israel went from bad to worse under the influence of its first king, Jeroboam.

However, guilt for abandoning the true God among the Israelites does not rest solely on the shoulders of this apostate king. His successors followed his example and in the history of his reigns, the name of Jeroboam becomes a kind of paradigm to describe the perverse way in which they reigned.

From Nadab it is said that he walked in the ways of his father (Jeroboam), and not in the ways of the Lord (1 Kings 15: 25-26). From Baasha it is said that he walked in the ways of Jeroboam, doing what seemed evil in the eyes of the Lord (1 Kings 15:33-34). The other king after him, Elah, son of Baasha, followed his father's example, and it is said that they angered the Lord God of Israel (1 Kings 16:8, 13). Zimrí, Elah's servant, ended up reigning in his place, as he conspired against him and killed him, as well as all the descendants of Baasha, in fulfillment of a prophecy (1 Kings 16:11-12).

However, Zimrí did no better than these wicked kings, his predecessors, on the contrary. In the few days that he reigned, seven days (1 Kings 16:15), he had enough time to be considered as wicked as its predecessors, and he is also said to have walked in the way of Jeroboam, doing what seemed evil in the eyes of the Lord (1 Kings 16: 18-19).

Omrí, who disputed with Tibni for the kingdom of Israel after Zimrí's death, was the winner and began to reign. He is said to have done worse than everyone who went before him, but he

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is also said to have walked in the ways of Jeroboam, that is, the depraved worship that the first king of Israel implanted continued to be followed by Omri, and it is said that he too angered the Lord God of Israel with his vanities (1 Ki 16:21-26).

What was at stake in the administration of these men was not merely the earthly prosperity of a nation, but true worship or false worship. They chose to maintain the false worship implanted by Jeroboam, so much so that in their biographies, the first king of the divided kingdom of Israel was remembered. Would the sixth king after Jeroboam do it differently? This is what we will see now.

Ahab could be a symbolic name or even a parody to end idolatry in Israel (in portuguese, Ahab is ‘Acabe’, that means ‘to end’). But no, on the contrary, the height of idolatry comes into play in his reign.

One of the greatest demonstrations of the contrast between true and false worship that we can find in the Holy Scriptures also comes into play in his reign.

Omri’s son, Ahab, was not content to just imitate his predecessors in the idolatrous depravity that followed from Jeroboam, he wanted more, and the terrible account of his biography states:

“And Ahab, the son of Omri, did which was evil in the eyes of the Lord, more than all those who went before him.”

“And it came to pass that (as if it were little to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat) he still took to wife Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians; and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. “

“And he raised an altar to Baal, in the house of Baal that he had built in Samaria. Ahab also made an idol; so that Ahab did much more to irritate the Lord God of Israel, than all the kings of Israel who were before him. “ 1 Kings 16: 30-33.

In this report we can conclude that the situation of a nation, and why not say a religious denomination too, can always get worse. However, many believe they are making

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progress, that they are on the right track.

God, however, does not let the path of nations and religions follow its unbridled course in the practice of evil and perversion of worship, without intervening at a given moment. It may seem that nothing will happen to put an end to wickedness, but this is a dangerous mistake, because it leads men to think that everything is fine, because they confuse God's patience with his approval of their bad practices.

In the time of King Ahab this divine intervention took place, and God sent one of the greatest prophets that ever existed. Elijah began his ministry in a similar way to the nameless prophet, which we saw in the previous chapter. However, he completed his mission much better than the man of God who rebuked Jeroboam.

Without warning, Elijah entered the presence of King Ahab and pronounced the divine sentence: "*The Lord God of Israel lives, before whose face I am, that in these years there will be neither dew nor rain, but according to my word.*" 1 Ki 17:1.

Perhaps these words did not have an immediate effect on Ahab's mind, but when he realized that neither rain nor dew was really falling anymore, he began to worry. This concern would last a long three and a half years. Not for Elijah, of course, because God used unusual ways to support him in the midst of drought. Crows brought their food to Elijah (1 Kings 17:2-7) and then a widow supported it (1 Kings 17:8-16).

This situation is proof that God sustains those who obey him. It puts in sharp contrast the prophet who rebuked Jeroboam, but who returned to eat bread at the old prophet's house, contrary to God's command.

Elijah did not have to disobey God, or supposedly obey him, to make a living. He had to effectively obey God in order to be supported.

In the days in which we live, many seeming messengers from God are defending their livelihood and that of their families by following and practicing mistakes.

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Elijah demonstrated that the true servants of God are sustained by what comes out of the mouth of God, and not from the mouth of “old prophets”, nor that for that God needs to use unusual means to support his messengers, such as crows and poor widows.

It is more convenient for many religious people today to follow the “old prophets”, not knowing the end that awaits them. Follow men who are supposed to have more experience in the work of God, but who are nothing more than men experienced in iniquity and disobedience.

The problem is not in resting after a mission, as Elijah did (1 Kings 17:2-6) and the man of God who rebuked Jeroboam as well (1 Kings 13:10-14). The big question is to do or not do what God asks. That is the problem.

In reality it shouldn't be a problem, but for many people it is a problem, as they disobey and forget that the consequences of disobedience are what are the real problem for the disobedient.

The prophet Elijah was dealing with a nation of disobedience, from the king, the nation's greatest earthly mandate, to the servants, who submitted themselves to a worship of a God other than the true one. Exceptions existed, of course, although Elijah thought he was alone, there were some (7,000) who, even hidden or anonymous, had not bowed to corrupt worship (1 Kings 19:18).

Nowadays there are also people who, despite being led by corrupt men, maintain their integrity, and God knows it. People who do not bow to corrupt worship, even though many around them are succumbing to this widespread apostasy. But who are these? Are they really worshiping the true God?

Elijah contrasted the true God of the false god. Elijah named the gods so that the people really knew who the true God was.

Three and a half years later (Luke 4:25) Elijah appeared to vindicate the honor of the God of Israel. Many may think: why

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did it take so long?

God's time is not man's time. It seems to sound like a cliché, those phrases that are so common become obvious, but there is no better answer.

God knew from the beginning how long with this punishment the idolaters would be able to survive, and it was necessary to reach the extreme so that when the true God was truly confirmed as the only one, people could be sure of it.

Everything seemed to happen for the sake of the false and idolatrous. The prophets of Baal and Asherah were the majority, almost a thousand (1 Kings 18:19), in contrast to Jehovah's prophets who had survived: one hundred (1 Kings 18:13) in addition to Elijah. The numerical difference was favorable to false prophets, since the true ones were around ten percent in relation to the false ones.

Still, Jehovah's prophets were hidden, as Jezebel killed many prophets of God, but Obadiah providentially hid those prophets, fifty at a time, in a pit and supported them on bread and water (1 Kings 18:7-13) while the false prophets of Baal and Asherah ate at Jezebel's table.

Today this story is repeated in an unknown but similar proportion. Many false prophets are enjoying the greatest and best privileges of nations and denominations, eating the good and the best, while the true servants of God are practically hidden in the midst of so much false worship.

And which god has been worshiped? The god Mamon, the god of wealth, of prosperity ... But what prosperity is there as a people who profess to serve God, actually serve their own selfish interests? While it is only the wolves that thrive and the sheeps weakening to death, being plundered in their wool and fat? The greatest risk to Israel's true prosperity, was not in the nations around it, but among its own rulers and false prophets. And how is it today? Where is the greatest risk to the true prosperity of religions and nations? Within themselves. But the people of Israel were to witness the cause of their degradation,

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and those who were apparently prospering in deception would suffer the consequences of worshiping and teaching false worship.

The big day had come, the day to confront the one who had pronounced the punishment of drought. Could he prove that Baal was not really the provider of all the blessings provided in the field?

Elijah orders Ahab to summon all the people of Israel on Mount Carmel, as well as Baal's four hundred and fifty prophets, and Asherah's four hundred prophets to challenge them. Just imagine: eight hundred and fifty prophets against Elijah. In human eyes it was a challenge in which Elias would be slaughtered. But whoever was with Elijah was far more powerful than even all the false prophets in the whole world, with all the evil host that leads them.

But Elijah's order was fulfilled, and Ahab summoned all Israelites and prophets to Mount Carmel. When all the people were gathered there, Elijah said to them:

“How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If Jehovah is God, follow him; but if Baal is, then follow him.” 1 Kings 18:21.

The text goes on to say that upon hearing this question from Elias, the people did not answer a word. This is still being reflected today.

Many today are worshiping with a divided heart, they do not know whether they serve one God or another. And Jesus said that it is impossible to serve two masters (Matthew 6:24).

Elijah, after the silence of the people, told them that he alone had remained as the prophet of the Lord, but that the prophets of Baal were four hundred and fifty men.

It seems that he wanted to emphasize this huge difference very well. Then he explained the terms of the challenge, which were the same for both:

“Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay

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it on the wood, but do not set fire under it; I will prepare the other bullock and lay it on the wood, but I will not set fire under it, and you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Jehovah; the God who responds by fire, let him be the God. All the people responding, said: the proposal is good. “1 Kings 18:23-24.

These were, therefore, the terms of the challenge proposed by Elijha and everyone readily agreed to participate and submit to it.

Elijah asked them to choose the bull and offer the sacrifice first, because they were the majority. He gave them the priority of making the sacrifice that was to be answered with fire by the god they claimed to be the real one.

They then began to prepare the bullock they chose and placed it under the altar, without, however, setting it on fire. Then they began to call on Baal to answer his prayers and rituals and send fire to burn his offering, as a sign of approval and demonstration that he existed.

Baal’s prophets cried, says the biblical account (1 Kings 18:26) from morning until noon, but nothing happened. They jumped on the altar crying out to Baal and no fire to consume the sacrifice.

At noon Elijah began to mock them by asking them to cry out louder, for perhaps Baal was talking, or doing something, or even on the road or sleeping, and if they cried out louder he would wake up from sleep.

And that is what they did, however, after hours of crying out with a loud voice, in this vain attempt, the Bible says that they began to cut themselves with knives and lancets, offering their own blood as an offering to Baal, but he did not manifest, proving that it existed.

The cry of Baal’s prophets went on until the hour of the evening sacrifice without any manifestation of the god they invoked. Everything they did was not enough to “awaken” Baal and make him respond with fire.

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After the prolonged and desperate attempt by the prophets of Baal, Elijah then begins to play his part in the challenge. He summons the people to come closer and the people come close to where he was. Elijah then begins to restore an altar of the true God that was there, but in ruins.

After the altar was restored, he made a gully around it and ordered water to be placed on the altar with the bullock that was cut into pieces there. They then threw four pitchers of water, just as Elijah had ordered. Elijah ordered them to do this two more times, and the altar was soaked with water three times, to the point that the water ran around the altar and until the gully was filled with water.

Perhaps some who were there might have thought: “Elijah is completely crazy! How does he expect any fire to burn that sacrifice?” Then, at the hour of the afternoon sacrifice, Elijah, unlike the desperate cry of the prophets of Baal, utters the following prayer calmly and confidently:

“O Jehovah, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be manifested today that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Jehovah! Answer me so that these people will know that you, Jehovah, are God, because you have turned their hearts back!” 1 Kings 18:36-37.

And God answered Elijah’s prayer. The continuation of the account tells us that the true God answered Elijah’s prayer in such a way that he sent fire instantly and the fire not only burned the animal of the sacrifice, but consumed the wood, the stones, the dust and even licked the water that was in the gully.

This impressive manifestation of God’s power impressed the people. The biblical account says that they fell on their faces and proclaimed that only Jehovah was the true God (1 Kings 18:39).

Elijah had won the challenge, but the victory was not Elijah’s, God had vindicated his sovereignty and demonstrated to the people that Baal was not the true God. Elijah then orders

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that all false prophets be killed, without any of them escaping. The order was carried out immediately in the eyes of all the people and King Ahab.

The honor of the true God having been shown and the true cult shown, in contrast to the false, God could now pour rain on them, which had been waiting for them for three years, which had not fallen on the earth for three years. Elijah says goodbye to Ahab and orders him to go home before the rain catches him on the way, such was Elijah's faith that God, who had already poured fire from heaven, would now pour the rain to solve the drought problem that was plaguing his nation idolater.

However, the rain would not come without Elijah insistently praying to God seven times, until abundant rain fell after his drought prophecy three years earlier (1 Kings 18:43-45; James 5:17-18).

The story doesn't stop there, it continues. But for the considerations to which we propose, this part of the story teaches us a lot about the truth that there is a false worship in contrast to the true one.

Just as in the first human family, this truth was evident (Cain and Abel), then going through several other situations reported in the Scriptures, some of which we commented on in this book, the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel teaches us great and important lessons applicable to the current context.

Although today we cannot count on this type of manifestation, because the enemy would be authorized to make even fire descends from heaven in the sight of men (Revelation 13:13), we can learn from Scripture what true worship is.

The people of Israel were so mistaken in their concepts of God that they confused them with Baal. Perhaps today we think this is absurd, but they were caught in this trap. What about us? What trap have we fallen into? Has our concept of God today and our worship been approved by the Scriptures? Is our worship correct? And does the concept of God that we create in our

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minds reflect the truth about who God really is? Answering these questions is crucial if we want to know if our way of worshiping God is leading us to life or death, just like those false prophets did.

Is our concept of God supported by pastors of the most varied denominations, such as the concept of the Israelites was subjected to the prophets of Baal and Asherah? Are government officials, such as the idolatrous kings of Israel and Judah to Ahab, dictate the gods we will follow?

Today the overwhelming majority of the world's population has followed a god made by theologians, that is, a god who is nothing but Baal compared to the true God. However, many believe they are truly worshiping God. But isn't the God that religions worship today the true God? Later on we will have some clarifications on this fact.

Many can rationalize that they are worshiping the true God, because that God works miracles and great signs in their lives, healings and great manifestations that prove his existence. Are these manifestations evidence that they are worshiping the true God, the God of Elijah? It is a serious thing to think about because, as we have already seen, Jesus once said:

“Not everyone who says to me: Lord, Lord! will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? And, in your name, we do not cast out demons? And in your name haven't we done many wonders? And then I will profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice iniquity. “ Matthew 7:21-23. It will be very sad for them to hear these harsh words, isn't it?

Therefore, doing the will of the heavenly Father is more important than manifesting miraculous signs. At that time Elijah performed the mentioned sign because the people were not doing the will of their heavenly God and Father. But nowadays many are supposed to be performing miraculous signs by the

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power of God, but they are just people practicing iniquity and using the name of Jesus to justify their wicked practices.

How can we then identify whether we are worshiping the true God, since many who work miracles are practicing iniquity? (Matthew 7:21-23). With each chapter we get closer to the answer, so read on.

Chapter 5

“This is the house of God!”

“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to that word, it is because there is no light in them.”
Isaiah 8:20.

This is one of the answers to the question just asked. Our parameter for testing an idea or concept supposedly of divine origin is whether it fits the law and the testimony, a clear indication of the whole Word of God (law = Torah, pentateuch, books of Moses and testimony = testimony of the prophets, that is, other books of the prophets of God).

Many are following men (and even women), but are ignoring what the Scriptures say about true worship. That is why we have witnessed the greatest spiritual poverty in the world, as churches are infested with people alienated from the Bible, bound by the traditions of men.

Remember that we addressed the fact that many are saying that “the Lord has revealed to me” when in fact they have been saying deceitful things? A passage from Scripture tells us the following about this:

“If there arise among you a prophet or dreamer of dreams and show you a miracle or prodigy, and the miracle or prodigy that he spoke to you about come to pass, and he says: Let’s go after other gods, that you didn’t know, and let serve them, you will not hear the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, because Jehovah your God is testing you to know whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. You will walk after Jehovah your God, and you will fear him; you will keep his commandments and obey his voice, and serve him, and join him. That prophet or that dreamer of dreams will be killed, because he spoke rebellion against Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and brought you out of

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the house of bondage, to get you out of the way in which Jehovah your God commanded you to walk. Thus, you will exterminate evil from among you.” Deuteronomy 13:1-5.

That text is revealing, isn't it? In it we see clearly that God had already left through Moses how to proceed in cases such as what happened on Mount Carmel, where Elijah ordered the false prophets to be killed.

In this text we see clearly that it is possible that many miracles happen not from God, but from the enemy. Elijah was aware of these guidelines, for Moses left everything related to how kings and prophets were to proceed in accordance with the books that Moses had left them.

However, the nation of Israel was increasingly degraded in apostasy, with all the truth in its hands. Is it not so today? Everyone has the Scriptures and professes to follow it as a norm of faith, however, in practice, apostasy and disobedience to the Law of God prevail.

Ahab, while witnessing the great manifestation of Jehovah's power on Mount Carmel, did not change his life, but continued to follow the whims of his wicked and idolatrous wife, Jezebel (1 Kings 21:25-26).

God ordered Elijah to pronounce a harsh sentence against Ahab's house, not only for killing Naboth and taking his vineyard, which was next to his palace (1 Kings 21:1-16), but for all the iniquities he had already committed without repenting to God.

When Elijah finds him, Ahab sarcastically says to him, *“Have you found me, O my enemy?”* Elijah then replied positively: *“I found you, because you sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of Jehovah.”* 1 Kings 21:20.

Interesting isn't it? Ahab being “caught with his mouth in the jar” asks Elijah as if to say: “you again?” or “You found me again, right?” Ahab knew he was sinning.

Today, likewise, many know that they are in error and consider those who rebuke them from God as their enemies. The

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apostle Paul once said: “*Am I therefore become your enemy for telling the truth?*” Galatians 4:16. I make Paul’s words mine and I do not expect to be winning some readers as my enemies. However, I do not know if this will be possible by the end of the reading this book.

The fact is that Ahab considered Elijah to be his enemy, but from him it is said that he would have the same sentence as Jeroboam and Baasa, kings before him, having Ahab their descendants wiped out, just as these wicked kings had (1 Kings 21:22).

Hearing this sentence from God through Elijah’s mouth, Ahab humbled himself, tore his dresses, covered himself with sack, fasted and was greatly contrite, and God ordered Elijah to return and tell him that he would not carry out that sentence in his day, but in your son’s day.

The history of Israel and Judah continued to follow their idolatry career, interspersed by a few kings who turned to God and reformed the nation, eliminating idolatrous contamination. But little difference happened, because the rebellion was rooted in the hearts of the people.

Messengers and more messengers were sent to warn the people of the results of their apostasy, but only to fall on aloof ears. The people who had been established to be a people owned exclusively by God, gave themselves up to other gods and forgot, or ignored, who their God really was.

Generations succeeded and many were born without knowledge of the true God, learning from an early age to practice perverted worship, as they learned from their parents to worship what was not God, they learned to worship gods of wood, stone, clay, while the living God was ignored and irritated by all of this.

The consequences of all these abominations against God would not go unpunished. The Most High was already about to pour his wrath on them, but before that he would send yet another prophet to warn them of the evil that would befall them

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if they did not repent and reform.

From the womb of his mother, God had chosen a man for this mission. Jeremiah should be the instrument chosen by the God of Israel to fulfill this purpose and to alert the idolatrous nation before they are punished for all wickedness and alienation from the one who really was their God.

Jeremiah, at first, as a child, did not want to take on the harsh mission of a prophet to alert and warn his countrymen of all the evil they were doing.

When God began to speak to him and guide him about his calling to the office of prophet, it was very difficult for him to assimilate that even in his childhood, God was calling him to carry out a hard mission.

However, time passed, and when it was time to start, Jeremiah had no way to escape his responsibility. God had empowered him, called him and he was not rebellious to his word, he accepted his mission and pronounced the words of God.

The Most High commissioned Jeremiah to be his mouth, prophesying not only to Judah and Israel, but to all nations, pronouncing prophetic judgments, parables and symbolic visions in order to reveal God's plans to people, kings and nations.

Jeremiah then began his prophetic ministry by declaring in the ears of the inhabitants of Jerusalem the way in which God had loved them and the way in which they reciprocated that love.

The prophet constrained them to think about the way in which God had guided them and the way in which they exchanged him for what is worthless, for useless idols. He showed them illustratively how they behaved: as a prostitute.

He showed them that the content of their prayers to wooden gods was absurd, as they said to a piece of wood: "You are my father; and the stone: you begot me." Jeremiah 2:27. Doesn't something similar happen today? Are not some

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religious who profess to be children of the Most High God calling their mother an image of plaster or any other material?

Through Jeremiah, God was transmitting to them all their dissatisfaction and the way He felt, with the people turning their backs and not their faces, but at the time of the squeeze turning to Him and, as if nothing had happened, they asked help.

They were called to repent before the evil would come upon them, for they were doing astonishing things (Jr 5:30). The spiritual leadership of the people were the heads in the rebellion and the people’s departure from the true God. Of them it is said:

“Prophets prophesy falsely, and priests rule hand in hand with them; and that’s what my people want. [...]” Jr 5:31.

Impressive isn’t it? The prophets and priests were liars and the people still wanted to follow them. Would we be in a different situation today? Would today’s priests, bishops, pastors and other religious leaders be in a better situation than the ancient Israel? What about the people? Would they not be satisfied today with lying and deceitful guides? It is something serious for us to reflect on. However, Jeremiah with concern gave them God’s warning:

“Accept discipline, O Jerusalem, lest I depart from you; lest I turn you into desolation and uninhabited land.” Jr 6:8.

But the people were not willing to listen, just as many today are not. The people seemed to have their ears closed to understand the warning that aimed at their salvation and preservation from the near ruin, however, the words of God seemed to them a shameful thing, that did not sound good to the ears (Jeremiah 6:10).

Today the same thing happens. Many people seem to be ashamed of the Word of God, they don’t like it, as do the people of Israel. But what will these people do when the end comes?

Read the book of Jeremiah. See how those people were so far from God. But the worst is that they professed to be God’s people, as many today are professing to be. They go to the church, perform functions in it, give their offerings and tithes,

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observe certain religious ordinances, but they are as far from God as those people in Jeremiah's day were.

In chapter seven of Jeremiah (read) we can see that the people continued with their religious rituals, went to the temple, sacrificed the animals, fulfilled the rituals as ordered by the law, but everything was just an empty formality.

The people relied on the fact that they had the temple of the Lord and attended that temple, but the prophet warned them not to trust false words saying that this was the temple of the Lord, that is, the house of God, because it would be of no use if they didn't correct their lives from the wrong things they were doing.

We don't live in a different situation these days. Not even! Many people are proud of their denominations and their beautiful temples, but they do not seek to embellish the soul temple and live a righteous life before God. They commit all kinds of abomination to hide in a temple as if they were good people. In Jeremiah's day the house of God was serving to shelter practitioners of all kinds of abominations, see:

"What's that? You steal and kill, you commit adultery and swear falsely, you burn incense to Baal and you walk after other gods you do not know, and then you come and stand before me in this house that is called by my name, and you say, We are saved; yes, just to continue practicing these abominations! Is this house that is called by my name a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I saw this myself, says the Lord. "Jr 7:9-11.

I honestly do not believe that today, in the last days, the situation of the professed people of God is better than that of that people. Many are using the name "Christian" to cover up the most vile abominations, yet they take the name of God on their lips, in various houses of worship, and say they are saved by the blood of Jesus, only to continue in their sinful practices, thinking that God does not see.

However, the same God who saw everything that Jeremiah's contemporaries did, is closely watching the conduct

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of his professed people in the final days of the history of this sinful world.

The situation was so serious that God forbade Jeremiah even to pray for those people (Jr 7:16), for He would not hear the prayer that was made for them.

The rebellious nation did not want to walk in the ways that God had given them, in the ancient paths (Jr 6:16), but they wanted to walk in their own ways, do their own will, follow their own advice and satisfy the desires of the evil heart (Jr 7:23-24).

Isn't that the behavior we are tempted to practice? How often are we slaves to our own will? How many times do we follow our own advice, not God's? Many of us rationalized: “I think this or that has nothing to do with it.” And in this compromise with evil, we are led to follow the inclination of our evil sinful and rebellious heart that keeps us from God.

An x-ray of the nation can be seen in this statement: *“Jehovah says: because they have forsaken my law, which I have set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, nor have they walked in it, but have walked after the stubbornness of their hearts and after the Baalins, thing their parents taught them; therefore, thus says Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel: Behold, I will feed this people with absinthe and give them water of gall. I will also scatter them among nations that neither they nor their parents knew; and I will send the sword after them until it has consumed them.”* Jr 9:13-16; Brazilian Translation.

As we have seen, the people learned to follow Baal and forgot to follow Jehovah. Israel learned to worship Baal and forgot to worship Jehovah. Their parents taught them from an early age to be devotees of Baal, and true worship, the true God, was forgotten by them. The recognition after Elijah's challenge on Mount Carmel, that only Jehovah was God (1 Kings 18:39), was quickly forgotten.

Once again God warned Jeremiah not to plead with Him for the people: *“You therefore do not pray for this people, nor*

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lift up a cry or a prayer for them; for I will not hear them when they cry unto me, because of their evil. “ Jr 11:14.

The situation was really irreversible, not because God couldn't do anything for them, but because they didn't want to listen to God and turn to him. False prophets were deceiving the people by saying that nothing bad would happen to them, and that they would be at peace, but God pronounced through Jeremiah that the calamities they said would not come upon the nation, these same calamities would be the cause of their destruction (Jeremiah 14:14-15).

In Israel's history we see that great men of God interceded for the people at times when God was about to destroy them (Exodus 32:9-14, 30-34; Numbers 14:13-19; 1 Samuel 12:19-23). However, in the situation the people were in, not even the intercession of Moses and Samuel would save the Israelites from their punishment if they were alive and could intercede for them. And this is what God said to Jeremiah when he manifested himself in these terms:

“Jehovah said to me, even though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my soul could not be with this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.” Jr 15:1.

Terrible things were destined for these people: death, sword, famine and captivity. Whoever was destined for one of these judgments could not escape, but he would certainly suffer it in return for his apostasy.

And how it has been nowadays? What awaits the people who profess to serve God? What retribution will befall the alleged people of God for their disobedience? This will be answered in the last chapter.

Chapter 6

Adoration of appearances

Another prophet to whom the Lord showed the abominations that were committed in Jerusalem was the prophet Ezekiel. He saw that within Jehovah's own temple terrible things were happening, something that left him astonished and perplexed (Ezekiel 8).

He saw in the temple, which should be for the exclusive use of Jehovah's worship, images that were making God jealous (Ezekiel 8:3). The Lord spoke to Ezekiel and showed him these things in a sacred space, which was supposed to be the abode of God's glory, but which was driving him away from his sanctuary (Ezekiel 8:6).

However, Ezekiel would see worse things than those images. Jehovah told him to dig into the wall where there was a hole in that temple, and then look through that hole to see other major abominations. Ezekiel obeyed the Lord's instructions and then saw all manner of reptiles and abominable animals painted on the walls of that room (Ezekiel 8:7-10).

The prophet also saw there seventy elders of the nation standing before those images, with censers in their hands in a kind of religious ritual as if praying with their censers for those images (Ezekiel 8:11).

With the impression of that scene in mind, Ezekiel hears from God: "*Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the darkness, each one in their cameras? For they say, Jehovah does not see us; Jehovah has abandoned the land.*" Ezekiel 8:12.

However, that was not all that Ezekiel would see. Jehovah told him that greater abominations he would see. And he saw it. His torrid visions of abominable things continued and the account says that he was taken in vision at the entrance to the

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door on the north side of the temple and there he saw women sitting weeping to Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14). But it did not stop there; more abominations were shown to the prophet.

He was taken in spirit into the temple, into the atrium from within the house of Jehovah, and, behold, between the porch and the altar, there were twenty-five men with their backs to the temple, their faces facing east and worshipping the sun, facing east (Ezekiel 8:16).

After showing the prophet Ezekiel all these abominations that were committed in his house, God said to the prophet:

“Then he said to me: Do you see this, son of man? Is there anything more frivolous to the house of Judah than these abominations that they do here? Having filled the land with violence, they irritate me again; and behold, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore, I will also treat them with fury; my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; even if they shout in my ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them.” Ezekiel 8:17-18.

God was really very angry with all this. A people who should be his representative to the peoples around him; a people who should bring to others the knowledge of the true God and the true worship, was in the mud of idolatry dirty from head to toe, worshipping images, worshipping various false gods and practicing all sorts of sins, thinking that God saw nothing.

But, God was not only seeing everything, but he was about to pour out his punishment on them. When observing in vision the fulfillment of this punitive judgment against Jerusalem, Ezekiel observes that God assigns a man dressed in linen with a scribe’s case around his waist, *“and said to him: Go through the middle of the city, through the middle of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of men who sigh and who moan for all the abominations that are committed in the middle of it. And he said to the others, when I heard, ‘Go through the city after him, and smite; let not your eye spare neither have pity. Slay old and young, virgins, boys and women, until they are wiped out; but do not approach any man upon whom is the mark;*

and start with my sanctuary. “ Ezekiel 9:4-6.

Terrible description, isn't it? God knew exactly what was going on with those people. How it is nowadays? Has God become more accommodating? Does he not know what is happening today with the people who claim to be his?

As we saw, in Ezekiel's time only the people who were dissatisfied with the abominations committed by the house of Israel would be marked with a sign that would protect them from the destructive calamity. The others, from children to old people, young people, virgins, women, all would be exterminated.

This story has a lot to teach us, as it will repeat itself and we need to prepare for what will soon come to the disobedient and rebels, for those who profess the name of God, but dishonor Him.

In the penultimate chapter of this book we will see how this will be repeated at the end of time and we will know how to prepare ourselves so that we are not among those who will be exterminated by the just divine vengeance.

But, going back to this sad story, we need to understand that God did everything for these people to practice true worship, so that they would follow only Him, the true God. But they didn't want to. They had gone too far. Theirs were said to have become worse than Sodom and Gomorrah (Eze 16:46-47).

The renowned lecturer, Pastor Billy Graham, once wrote that if God did not punish the United States for the moral corruption of that country, God would have to ask forgiveness for Sodom and Gomorrah.

He would not only say against the United States, but against all countries, and also against many so-called believers, because they has practiced worse perversions than the Sodomites, which has caused their destruction.

Certainly God owes no forgiveness to anyone for the way he treats and judges each individual or nation, but surely the world we live in is far worse than the cities destroyed by fire, Sodom and Gomorrah. Today abominations are committed on

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the approval of religious institutions.

Religions that not only approve of homo affective marriage, but also religions that were founded on the basis of this practice. However, depravities are not exclusive to these relationships.

Heterosexuals themselves have practiced many abominations under the cloak of religion. I remember the other day watching a video captured with a hidden camera (and a blurred image to cover the private parts), in which a pastor of a certain church had sex with two teenagers in the pastoral room, while the service was taking place. Scandals like this exist in droves in the temples and among the religious of the most varied religions.

However, this type of thing is not exclusive to the evangelical environment. The Catholic Church itself is the target, from time to time, of sexual scandals, involving pedophile priests. The church has paid very high compensation to families of victims of these abuses that keep happening.

As we see and know, we are not in a better condition than ancient Israel, but if all these abominations were not enough, we are still victims of a religious system corrupted by the deception of theories and traditions that divert the people from true worship, and until the end of this book we will talk more about these teachings.

The fact is that Israel was loaded with abominations. You can read about some of these abominations in chapter twenty-two of Ezekiel. The fact is that God used several prophets throughout the career of apostasy of the Hebrew people to warn and call them to repentance, but as stubborn mules they did not accept to be corrected and continued their career towards destruction.

In their history we have a warning sign about the direction of God's professed people today. Are we behaving the same way? Are we refusing God's opportunities for repentance and resting in false security like them?

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These are serious questions for us to reflect on, as the end is approaching and many seem to be sleeping, playing with salvation. Like the Hebrews, many today do not want to heed the calls for warning. But God said to Ezekiel:

“But you will tell them my words, whether they listen or stop listening, because they are rebels”. Ezekiel 2:7.

“But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because it does not want to listen to me; for the house of Israel is stubborn and hard-hearted.” Ezekiel 3:7.

Sad situation, isn't it? But this may be the same situation as a people who believe themselves to be God's people. Perhaps the content of this simple little book is of no use in the lives of many who will read it, but even so I need to make it available to readers, so that perhaps someone will take notice and confirm in the Scriptures if what is written here is really worthy of attention. The mission of those who must warn the sinner is not an easy one. Jehovah said to Ezekiel about his responsibility:

“Therefore, O son of man, I made you a watchman over the house of Israel; then you will hear the word from my mouth and warn them from me.

“If I say to the wicked: O wicked, you will surely die; and if you do not speak, to deter the wicked from his way, that wicked will die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand.”

“But if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.” Ezekiel 33:7-9.

These were the conditions of Ezekiel's call to the people.

And Ezekiel fulfilled his role, performed his mission with dedication, however, the people did not want to leave the condition in which he found himself. They preferred to continue following their rituals mixed with pagan and idolatrous practices.

The Bible tells us that they were accustomed to a formal religion, but nothing changed for the better in their lives.

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“And they come to you, as the people used to come, and they sit before you, like my people, and they hear your words, but they will not do them; for they flatter with their mouth, but their heart follows their covetousness. And, behold, you are to them like a lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do them not.” Eze 33:31-32.

Another prophet, describing this same situation in different words, said the following about this situation:

“For the Lord said: For this people come near me, and with their mouth, and with their lips, honor me, but their heart turns away from me, and their fear of me consists only in commandments of men, in which they was instructed.” Isaiah 29:13.

That was the condition of the people of God, they went to the temple, participated in sacred services, heard the words of God, but did not put anything into practice. They honored God only with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him who they professed to serve. They followed the ordinances of men, instead of following the commandments of God.

Are religious denominations in a better position today? I do not think so! Many follow teachings only on a routine basis, because they have been instructed in that way, without knowing whether what they follow is really God’s will. What about pastors and priests? What are you doing?

Many are responsible for this situation, as they perpetuate deception and falsehood with their distorted teachings of the living Word. The prophet Ezekiel admonished these leaders of the flock, who did not care for the sheep as they should, Ezekiel’s thirty-fourth chapter is entirely dedicated to these leaders.

An woe was pronounced against them for not feeding the sheep, but for themselves. Symbolically, the prophet described the situation of these men as taking everything they could use from the sheep (fat, wool, etc.) and not taking care of them as

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they should (Ezekiel 34:1-4).

What about today's pastors? Are they taking better care of the sheep than the shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel's day? This is certainly not the case, on the contrary, they are plundering the sheep worse than in ancient times. Many have been truly extorted in the name of faith, and the weapon used in this assault is not a firearm, but the Bible itself. Men who do not measure scruples to take from people everything they have, houses, cars, goods, livelihood, to live a life of luxury. Woe to these men, they will pay much more than they are charging for their cheating blessings.

As we have seen, the worship of God's people in those days and these days is not very different, on the contrary, they are very similar, leveling downwards, to the level of false, spurious worship.

All of this has been greatly offensive to God. The dangers of false worship with status of true is one of the greatest risks to Christian faith and personal salvation.

Chapter 7

Worship and idolatry

The Lord had already warned Israel and Judah of the consequences of their rebellion since their liberation from Egypt, for in His omniscience He knew what His people would be deciding on whom to worship.

Moses wrote and recorded for subsequent generations what would happen to them if they turned away from their God to worship other gods.

The interested reader can consult these warnings from God in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28, as these chapters explain in detail what the consequences of disobedience would be.

In addition to these warnings, God always sent prophets to warn his people, as we saw in the previous chapters of this book, but they did not listen to them. Thus, all the predicted consequences began to be fulfilled in their lives: drought, hunger, sword, cannibalism, slavery, exile, amazement, terror, disease, and all sorts of evils arising from their rebellion.

All of this has been happening little by little, since the time of the judges, when God handed them over to the power of their oppressors, and then for some time released them because of their claims and His mercy.

But, as it is reported in Leviticus 26, if the people did not keep in obedience to all the commandments of God, he would punish them again seven times more, and the punishments would always be more intense until the people went into exile and their land be desolate.

Whoever reads the chapters cited (Lv 26 and Deut. 28) will find its full fulfillment in passages like 2 Kings 17:7-23; 25: 1-22; 2 Chronicles 36; Jer. 6:9-21; 8:4-17; 21; 25:1-14; 44:1-14; 52; the 5 chapters of the book of Lamentations of Jeremiah;

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Ezekiel 5-7 and others that report the desolation of Jerusalem as a result of its idolatry and abandonment of the true God.

The few pages of this book are insufficient to report all that the people of God of old suffered for their rebellion against the Lord and their attachment to false worship. God fulfilled all the words he promised them as a result of his decisions.

Babylon came and destroyed the capital of the kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem, and its temple, so proudly esteemed. Many of its residents lost their lives as prophesied, from hunger, plague and the sword (cf. Jer. 14:12; 21: 9; 24:10; 27:13; 29:17; 38: 2; 42: 17 and 22; 44:13; Ezek. 5:12 and 17; 6:12; 7:15; 12:16).

The noblest and a part of the people were taken to Babylon, as well as the banishment of the disobedient to various parts of the world was prophesied (Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28: 64-68; Ezek. 23:46; Jer 39: 9; 52: 27) leaving only the poorest of the people in the destroyed and looted city.

The people who stayed, quickly rebelled against God, and even after all these tragedies did not submit to Him to obey Him. They went to Egypt, even under the warning of Jeremiah not to go, but even so they disobeyed, after saying that they would obey the word of the Lord on this matter (Cf. Jeremiah 42-44). They hoped to escape Nebuchadnezzar.

However, Egypt would not be a refuge for them, as it would also be attacked by Nebuchadnezzar. The people suffered and did not learn that their security was only in God, and in nothing else. Only a few fugitives could escape Egypt (Jr 44:14).

Years before, Samaria, the capital of Israel, had already suffered the same at the hand of the king of Assyria (2 Kings 17: 6), as a consequence of all the sins of idolatry instituted by his first king, Jeroboam, the golden calves that he instituted in Bethel and Dan, becoming centers of false worship (1 Kings 12: 25-33).

Even God having sent his prophets to rebuke and call them to repentance and reform, they remained rebellious against the Lord, guided by a succession of wicked kings (2 Kings 17:

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7-23) which caused their ruin.

With the city of Samaria desolate and with very few residents, the Assyrian king took people from Babylon, Cuta, Ava, Hamate and Sepharvaim and made them live in the capital of Israel to repopulate it.

However, this mix of people began to worship their false gods and the true God began to send lions who killed some of them. Then the people were taught to worship the God of the land so that this scourge would end, but they worshiped the true God and his false gods who were already accustomed to worshipping (2 Kings 17:24-41). For them, worshipping one more God was not wrong, as they were polytheists. But for God it was terrible, sharing his greatness with sculpted images was a terrible sin that He did not accept, but that the Samaritans continued to practice.

Nowadays, similar behavior continues to happen in the various religious denominations. Supposedly converted people bring their worldly customs to their religions and neither truly worship God nor fully serve the world and its passions. They try to serve two masters, but in reality they are serving the prince of darkness, because his interest is that we stay right on the wall, divided, undecided.

The one who abhors lukewarmness is Jesus, the faithful and true witness of Revelation 3:14-17) and His Father. Satan does not, he doesn't even care about lukewarmness, for him to be cold or lukewarm in faith is what matters, but if we are hot in faith he gets extremely angry.

Samaritans worshiped God and his idols. Today's believers worship God and his idols, his favorite artists, even if they are even "gospel stars", actors and actresses, players, sportsmen, in short, they share their affections between God and the things of the world, but the Bible says:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the

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eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. And the world passes away, and its concupiscence; but he who does the will of God remains forever.” 1 John 2:15-17.

For the Samaritans, to understand exactly what is true worship and false worship it was nothing more than a simple superstition, because they thought to obtain protection just by worshipping the “god of the land” so that in that land they could be at peace, but without, however, abandoning the other gods of their lands.

Today there is the same connivance about many wrong practices in the sight of God and many calm the conscience just saying that it is done in this or that country that way because it is from culture, and with that excuse many are worshipping other gods while they believe they are also worshipping the True God, when their practices are nothing more than empty rituals.

The people of Judah did not learn from the desolation of Israel, so they also went into captivity, just as the Israelites did years ago. But in captivity, the Jews would be tested again in relation to worship.

In the book of Daniel we find stories that inspire us to worship only the true God, even in the face of death, and perhaps this is a crucial part of this book for us to see the contrast between true and false worship.

Nebuchadnezzar made a great golden statue and ordered it to be adored by all, with the order that if anyone did not worship it, he would be thrown into the fiery furnace. For this event, all the provinces of Babylon were convened. You can read this story in chapter three of Daniel.

Assuming that you have read this story (Daniel 3), or already know it, I want to continue saying something that is not so clear in the report, but that is obvious, from the point of view of previous reports.

How many Hebrews were deported to Babylon? In fact, it wasn't just four, Daniel and his three friends, isn't it? Jeremiah in his last chapter reports that there were four thousand and six

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hundred who were deported to Babylon in three stages (Jeremiah 52:28-30).

In the book of Ezra, we have the account of those who returned from exile after seventy years, who were forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty (Ezra 2:1-70, especially verse 64). It was a great multiplication.

But what I mean is not restricted to cold, purposeless data and numbers. I want us to reflect on the following question: if many of God's people were captive in Babylon, and the story of Daniel 3 tells us that Nebuchadnezzar ordered everyone to worship the golden statue he erected, why were only three Hebrews opposed? Were there no more Hebrews in Babylon?

The overwhelming majority, even those who were supposed to worship the true God, were giving false worship. Those men, Mizael, Ananias and Azarias, were so faithful to God that they even decided to hand over their bodies to be burned, so as not to bend over an object, be it small, or even huge like that; be it clay, plaster, or even gold like that statue.

However, in our day the most futile excuses are offered to pay devotion and reverence to sculpture images. The Hebrews, in a way, were already so used to that practice in their land, that in foreign land, under pressure, this was almost automatic for many of them, except for Daniel's three faithful friends. Jeremiah had even prophesied that they would worship other gods to which they were exiled, and this happened not only in the event of the statue of Nebuchadnezzar but in many other situations (Jr 16:13).

Years before they were exiled (2 Kings 18:4), King Hezekiah had undergone a spiritual reform and in that reform he destroyed the bronze serpent that Moses had made so that those bitten by the serpent would look and heal (Numbers 21:8-9). However, the people continued their frantic search for corrupted worship, worshiping painted and / or sculpted images (Ezekiel 8 and Jeremiah 10; 12:16-17; 13:10-11; 23:13-14; etc.).

Now in a strange land we see the great majority of the

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people who had already gone through various situations, experiencing the punishments and mercy of God, worshipping the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar. But, it is necessary that we put in flagrant contrast the behavior of the three Hebrew faithful, Mizael, Ananias and Azarias, with all that crowd that at the sound of the most varied instruments bowed in false worship. A simple gesture, but fraught with serious implications.

Nowadays things are not very different. It is a fact that we do not have anyone forcing us to false worship as before. But even without a death sentence (for now, as we will talk about the last death sentence for true worshipers), even without the obligation to worship wrong, many are deliberately choosing to bow to a false system of worship.

Today we live a fashion adoration, adoration of the majority, where what everyone is doing prevails, what everyone is worshipping, and how everyone is worshipping. Siding with the three? Even more so with three eccentric that are so strange that they look like from another planet? It is the thinking of many.

Thus, crowds have bowed to a false model of worship that has been raised in many places. And it is not surprising that music continues to play its role in this process. Since false worship was preceded by music in the field of Dura (Daniel 3: 5, 7, 10, and 15), false worship in our day has been preceded by music. But what kind of songs? Have you ever wondered if the type of music you use in your worship is approved by God? Or do you believe that no matter what you sing, hear, promote in worship, that God accepts everything?

If human beings have different musical tastes, do you believe that God is so conniving in accepting anything? At a certain point in Hebrew history, God asked those who worshiped him to keep the noise of his songs from them because He would not accept them (Amos 5:23).

Is God accepting many “noises” called music these days? Not! Much of what is supposedly done for God He cannot accept, just as He did not accept the fruits that Cain offered, even

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if apparently with the best of intentions. Having good intentions is not enough when God makes it very clear what He wants and how He wants it.

Even the animal sacrifice that God ordained as a foreshadowing of His Son's death, even a correct practice, was being performed in the wrong way (1 Samuel 15:22; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Malachi 1:6-14).

True worship or false worship, in one way or another, involves each of us. Which one are we practicing? One thing is a fact: no one will think they are on the wrong side. But we have a pattern for finding that out: the sacred Scriptures.

As we have done so far, using the Bible, we have demonstrated that this has always been the point to be considered, but by many ignored, that is, worship.

God never authorized the use of images, carved or drawn, in the context of worshiping Him. The Bible is full of texts that demonstrate this clearly, no matter how many ignore them.

However, many give excuses or justifications for worshiping images, saying that this is art, that it is just to remember, illustrate, that they are not worshiping, etc. But what does the commandment say about it, the second commandment of the Law of God?

“You shall not make to you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or on earth beneath, or that is in waters under the earth. You will not worship them nor serve them, for I, Jehovah your God, am a zealous God, who visit the iniquity of parents in their children, unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, and shewing mercy for a thousand generations of those that love me and keep my commandments.” Exodus 20:4-6.

The commandment is clear, isn't it? Disrespecting the clear commandment of the holy Law of God, his people became involved in the worship of images, transgressing his clear ordinance, which is why they were punished as the

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commandment says, and deported to Babylon, where they continued to worship images, as we have seen previously.

However, today's religious have not behaved better than Jehovah's rebellious people in ancient times. On the contrary, they have ignored clear passages from the Holy Scriptures, Scriptures they profess to follow. We quote some of these texts below:

“You shall not make you idols, nor erect any graven image, neither shall you set up any image of stone in your land, to prostrate unto it; for I am Jehovah your God.” Lv 26:1.

The order is clear, isn't it? Do not make images or prostrate yourself in front of it. Let's see another text:

“Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you who are escaped of the nations; they have no knowledge that set up their wood of their graven images and pray unto a god who cannot save.” Isaiah 45:20.

The practice of conducting sculpture images in procession is older than many think. As we have seen, in his day the prophet Isaiah already condemned this idolatrous custom (Brazilian translation render this verse as: *'nothing is known to those who carry their wooden sculpture images in procession'*. Translator's note). However, this is a very common practice and taken for granted by many people who think they are worshiping the true God but, as we saw in the text of Isaiah, they do not know what they are doing.

“To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare unto him? The workman melts a graven image, and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold, and casts silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he has no oblation chooses a tree that will not rot; he seek unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the

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heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in: That brings the princes to nothing; he makes the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will you liken me, or shall I be equal? Say the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that brings out their host by number: he call them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one fail. Why say you, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faint not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Isaiah 40:18-31.

As we saw in this beautiful text by Isaiah, comparing Jehovah with figures or sculpted images is a serious mistake. However, many think they are worshiping God by bowing to images and sculptures. This is not true worship, but false worship and not acceptable to God. *“I am Jehovah, this is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise, to graven images.”* Isaiah 42:8.

However, many are turning to carved images to worship God through them, or to venerate other past saints and pray their intercession with God, but this is not proper in true worship, but in false, as the Bible says:

“For there is only one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.” 1 Timothy 2:5.

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Those who insist on this worship contrary to the Holy Scriptures are transgressing the second commandment of the Law of God (Exodus 20:4-6) and consequently the whole Law, for whoever stumbles on just one point is guilty of all (James 2: 10-11).

There are many other texts in Scripture that testify to the error of using figures or carved images in worship (Exodus 32: 1-8; Numbers 25:1-3; Deut. 7:25; 11:16; Judges 3:7-8; 1 Kings 12:25-33; 16:30-33; 2 Kings 17:9-20; Isaiah 40:19; 44:10; 46:6; Jeremiah 10:2-15; 50:38; 51:17; Ezekiel 7:20; 8 and 9; 16:17; 22:3-4; Daniel 5:22-23; Hosea 8:1-4; 13:2-4; Habakkuk 2:18-19; Rom. 1:22-23; Acts 17:29; 1 Corinthians 10:14-21; etc.).

In this book we present just a few examples to demonstrate that this type of worship is not approved by God. The carved images that He commanded to be made (Exodus 37: 1-9; Numbers 21:4-9) were not to be worshiped or venerated as many use to justify the veneration of images, but they had other purposes, not the veneration (worship).

As we have said, there are many other biblical texts that we could comment on, some of which perhaps some readers may even think are missing here. Other readers, on the contrary, may even think that the texts used and commented on in this book are exaggerated and inappropriate, not applicable to their case, and will persist in the veneration of images.

However, we are aware that the vastness of the Word of God is too embracing to exhaust the subject. On the other hand, we understand that some people have long-established religious habits, which makes it difficult for them to understand and accept the correct context of worship that we are discussing here.

But if someone really wants to do the will of God by worshipping Him, not as their religion dictates, they need to seek Him personally if what is written here is merely the opinion of an author, or a set of suitable biblical messages that demonstrate the contrast between true and false, even if it is necessary to re-read the book.

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Hananiah (Shadrach), Mizael (Meshach) and Azariah (Abed-nego), however, were faithful in a foreign land and did not bow to idolatry, as their countrymen did. They were honored by God with the presence of His own Son who was sent to stay with them in the furnace, and the fire had no power over them (Daniel 3:21-25).

We must be like these men, friends of Daniel and even more friends of God, who did not bow to false worship, did not bow to the imposing image of Nebuchadnezzar, because they knew that there is a Being more majestic than any image, the Most High and Sovereign of the universe.

What about us? Before who or what are we bowing? It would be before religious systems and what do they impose on us? Or before the true God? Are we bowing to what human leaders are proposing to us? Or before what God asks of us in His Word? Does our fear belong to God or the popular cry, the voice of the majority?

In the days of Daniel, Hananiah, Mizael and Azariah, worship was what defined everything. These days it is no different. Many are defining their eternal destiny through who or what they are choosing to worship. In the days of these young Hebrews they were the minority. And today, which side are we on?

Chapter 8

Change of luck

The faith of the brave young Hebrews was rewarded by God. They were freed and placed in positions of honor in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (Daniel 3:28-30).

Daniel's faith also suffered hard trials, tests that led him to a situation no less complicated than a fiery furnace. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den for the "crime" of worshiping the true God, praying to Him on his knees, while evil men made a ruler a "god" (Daniel 6:5-9).

The arrogant human intention to make men gods is not extinguished in our time. Many feel like true gods manipulating the fate of entire nations with their political decisions.

The problem lies more in the attitude of those who let themselves be praised than those who do, as in the case of Herod, who when the people honored him as a god he did not humble himself, but accepted human honors by puffing himself up with such flattering words (Acts 12:21-23). Accepting honors due only to the Sovereign of the universe caused Herod to die in the worst way, eaten by worms. But surely the attitude of those who praised Herod is also totally contrary to the guidelines of the Word of God and should not be imitated.

With Darius, however, it was different from the case of Herod. Whoever tried to put him above the Most High is the one who suffered a terrible death (Daniel 6:19-27). And Darius did not exalt himself above God, but he exalted the living God who had delivered Daniel from the lions' den so miraculously.

In the same way, there are men in positions of leadership in earthly governments who still maintain fear of the true God, whether few or many, this is not for us to judge, but the contrast between those who are exalted and those who know who is the most exalted, the Eternal God, it is a truth that we cannot deny.

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Undisputed fact is that even in politics, as we saw in these examples, the theme of worship is highlighted, in one way or another with simple or tragic consequences.

Another story that denotes this reality in the biblical account is the story of Esther, Mordecai and the near extinction of the Hebrew people in the days of the Persian king Ahasuerus. In this story we see clearly that the theme of worship (true x false) is capable of causing drastic changes, involving the preservation or death of human lives, as in all other biblical stories seen so far.

Esther was an orphan of father and mother. She was raised by her cousin Mordecai in the Persian citadel of Susa among the exiles of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had removed years ago (Esther 2:5-7). The contrast between true and false worship is clearly noticeable in the historical timeline as we have seen in the causes of Jewish exile and its consequences. This historical timeline is perennial and constant, until the end of time, because as we will see until the end of this book, worship will continue to be the key theme that will define between saved and lost until the end.

Esther, Mordecai and their contemporaries also did not escape the effects of deciding whom to worship, especially when Mordecai decides not to bow down to Haman (Esther 3:1-6) which makes the Persian prince deeply angry.

King Ahasuerus had exalted Haman above all other princes, and they all bowed down to him, which Mordecai did not do, for he worshiped only God. This aroused the desire for revenge in Haman, who intended evil, not only against Mordecai, but against all Jews (Esther 3:5-6).

We are not going to describe the whole story here, so we suggest that interested readers search the Scriptures to read the entire story in the book of Esther. But, the fact is that the entire destiny of a people was at stake by the whim of only one man.

Is this impossible today? I do not think so. And the attentive reader will also be able to research and see that it is not,

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as the Bible gives unmistakable evidence that at the end of time a man would try to put himself in God's place wanting to look like God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Haman failed to destroy God's people, but the evil he planned for the faithful worshipers fell on his own head, dying in the very gallows he prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

At the time of God's judgment this will also occur with the man of sin, with the son of doom of 2 Thessalonians 2, and he will be destroyed by God Himself as indicated in the continuation of the chapter (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

But who is this man of sin, son of perdition? Maybe you know, or maybe you think you know, or don't even realize who he is. By the end of this book, we will give more clues within the Word of God so that the interested reader can identify him.

For now, we want to make it clear that from Cain and Abel to the end of time in the history of this Earth, the theme of worship has divided people into two distinct poles, and with biblical stories we have demonstrated this very clearly.

In this story that we are now analyzing, we see clearly that true worshipers were saved from a death decree forged by Haman. With the intervention of the Jewish queen Esther, and the fasting and prayer of all Jews (Esther 4:16 and 9:1). God caused evil to fall on the evil ones and his people then were saved from death.

In the penultimate chapter we will see a Bible prophecy that reports something similar to be happen at the end of time.

Chapter 9

Worship taught by Jesus

I cannot fail to address the topic of worship in the teachings of Christ in the New Testament. Jesus left us rich lessons on the true worship that the Father accepts. I did not address all the stories on this subject in the Old Testament, and I certainly will not do so in the New. My goal is not to exhaust the theme of worship, as it is broad and complex. But just point out some important lessons.

Since he was born, Jesus was worshiped, first by the wise men from the east (Matthew 2:11) and then by the shepherds (Luke 2:8-20). This fact shows us from the beginning its heavenly origin.

However, Jesus never asked to be worshiped by anyone. You may be surprised by this statement, but it is the truth. Jesus never asked anyone to worship him. But, that does not mean that He should not be worshiped.

For example, in the desert, when he was tempted by the devil, the tempter asked Jesus to worship him (Matthew 4:8-9), and in return he would give Christ all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus did not say pretentiously to the devil: “Who do you think you are talking to? Do you know who my Father is? I am the Son of God! You who must adore me.”

No, Jesus did not give that pretentious answer, as some people do when faced with a difficult situation. Jesus simply replied with what is written in the Scriptures: “*Then Jesus said to him: Go, Satan, because it is written: To the Lord your God you will worship, and him only you will serve.*” (Matthew 4:10).

Even when he was worshiped after his childhood, in adulthood, Jesus was never worshiped for asking, but for showing his origin. For example, when He talked to the young man who had been healed by Him and had just been expelled

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from the synagogue, Jesus asked him if he believed in the Son of God, when Jesus manifested that this “Son of God” of whom He spoke was Himself, then the young man worshiped Him (John 9:35-38).

In another case, when Jesus’ disciples witnessed a great manifestation of Christ, walking over the sea and calming the storm, they said that He was truly the Son of God and worshiped Him (Matthew 14:22-33).

These examples, and many others, help us to understand that Jesus was not pretentious like the devil, who asked to be worshiped. Jesus was worshiped because he aroused that desire in those who truly wanted to worship him for being Him the Son of God.

Another interesting fact in Scripture is that God the Father commands even angels to worship his Son (Hebrews 1:6). And the Son, in turn, commands that God the Father be worshiped (Matthew 4:10 and John 4:23). But what about the third person in the Trinity? Shouldn’t he be adored too? By the end of this book, we will get biblical answers to that question.

For now, we need to understand that Jesus left many important lessons regarding true worship and the correct way to do it.

One of the stories that shows this truth in a classic way is the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. These were two personage from the time of Christ, who has a lot to say to us today.

The Pharisee was an individual participating in the religious leadership of Christ’s time. This man was quite the opposite of the publican, who was a Jewish tax collector for the Roman empire. In the account of the parable, we read as follows:

“Two men went up to the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other, publican. The Pharisee, stood and prayed thus with himself: O God, I thank you because I am not like other men, robbers, unjust and adulterers; or even as this publican. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

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The tax collector, however, standing afar off, did not even want to look up at heaven, but smoothe upon his breast, saying: O God, have mercy to me, a sinner! I tell you this man went down to his house justified, and not that one; because whoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.”
Luke 18:10-14.

This contrast is still noticeable today. We see many who allege to accomplish a number of things, but are devoid of true piety. They live only a life of appearance, but they are like the Pharisees, perfect on the outside and rotten on the inside (Matthew 23:27).

The publican was frowned upon by the religious leaders of the time, so much so that the Pharisee boasted that he was not born as one of them. Who today is so despised by religious leadership? Many may be in better condition than those who allege to be ministering the Word.

Many will answer Christ's call at the eleventh hour (Matthew 20:9-16), that is, almost at the end of the history of this world. And many who were almost saved, will be forever lost, for many first will be last, and many last will be first (Matthew 20:16).

It is not a guarantee of salvation merely to attend a religious temple, and Jesus made this very clear when talking to the Samaritan woman (John 4:5-42). I suggest that you read this story, even if you already know it, because it presents us with true worship that is acceptable to God.

This is one of the most important parts of this book, as we see an important explanation from Jesus as to true and false worship. When the woman asked about the right place to worship, whether in Jerusalem or on the mountain where they were, Jesus replied that it was not in either place, but in spirit and in truth (John 4:20-24).

Today we live in similar days, when people are very concerned about where God is to be worshiped, but not what kind of worship they are doing. Many think it has to be in their

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church, in their religion, in their temple, in their own way, according to their rules, according to their doctrines, or even without doctrines. And so, countless religious denominations believe they are truly worshiping. Nobody believes that he is practicing false worship.

But we must learn from the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, whether our worship of God is true or false, because Jesus once said that it is not enough to take the name of the Lord on our lips, but to do the will of the heavenly Father (Matthew 7:21).

The fact is that many who live claiming the name of the Lord in their denominations are not actually doing the Lord's will, but living a life of make-believe, and Jesus said that these people will be lost when He returns (Mat. 7:22-23 and 25:41).

We need to understand and be willing to do what the Lord requires of us. Solomon, the wisest man ever in this world, said that of all we have heard to date, the most important thing is to fear God and keep his commandments (Eccles. 12:13-14).

Many, however, do not care for obedience to God's commandments, based on misunderstood verses (Ex. Colossians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:15) that apparently give an idea that Jesus abolished the law of the ten commandments, and are teaching that this is no longer necessary.

They forget, however, that Jesus said that he did not come to abolish any of the commandments (Matthew 5:17-19) and that the apostle Paul himself is not in those verses (Col. 2:14 and Ephesians 2:15) speaking of the abolition of the ten commandments, but of the abolition of the law of sacrifices, that is, of the end of validity of ritualistic sacrifices, for the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, had already died on the cross and accomplished the true and real sacrifice for our sins.

It is well known that Paul has always exalted the law of God in many passages of Scripture (Romans 2:12-13; 3:31; 7:7 and 12; Ephesians 6:2; etc.). Therefore, the apostle is not speaking of the abolition of the moral law, but of the ceremonial,

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the Levitical laws concerning the sacrifices of bulls and goats that by their blood cannot cleanse sins (Heb. 10:4).

But, back to the question asked by the Samaritan woman: what is the right place to worship? We again emphasize, as Jesus did, that it is not the place, but the worshiper who is most important to the Father.

Many are concerned with merely attending a religion and being confined for a certain period of time within the four walls of a religious temple (whatever it may be) and forget that God is more interested in what or who is dwelling within us; that we should be the real temples for his home (1 Corinthians 3:17; 6:19-20; Hebrews 3:6).

However, many, even religious leaders, have the inner temple of their souls contaminated with all kinds of impurity (Matthew 23:24-28; Romans 2:21-23) while appearing to be a life of holiness. But God knows each one.

Jesus said that the worship that His Father is seeking is spiritual and true worship, not appearance and local worship. It is not enough to go to this or that church, following God according to our own wishes, but according to His will.

A worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23) is a worship that goes beyond the borders and walls of temples, a worship that is willing to follow the truth and not the appearance of the truth, a worship that is willing to offer a lamb when this is what God asks for, and not fruits, like Cain, however much it is loaded with good intentions.

The worship that God expects of us must be true, spiritual, not carnal, according to our own selfish inclinations and desires, not merely a worship in the temple or at the mount as the Samaritan woman imagined (John 4:20).

God wants to be worshiped as He specifies that worship should be, and not as we think it should be. And to know how God wants to be worshiped we need to learn to spend time with Him, studying His Word and being willing to obey him from the heart.

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Jesus had to expel those who made His Father's house a place of commerce (John 2:13-16 and Matthew 21:12-13). Those people forgot, or never learned, the real purpose of that place and so they went through that disappointing situation.

But are things different today? Are today's temples cleaner than the Jerusalem temple? Unfortunately the answer is no. As we saw a few pages ago, at the time of the prophet Jeremiah, the people were basing themselves on the idea that they had the temple of the Lord and that they need not fear anything.

Nowadays it is not very different, only if this difference is for the worse, as many people rely on the idea that they are on the right path to regularly visit the temples of their denominations, but they are more polluted perhaps than the temple that Jesus needed cleanse in His days.

The time will come when these places will be so polluted, but so polluted, that it will be necessary to get out of them so as not to be destroyed (Revelation 18:1-4). We will understand this better by the end of this book.

When Stephen denounced all the sins of the religious leaders of his day, the Jewish priests were not at all satisfied. When Stephen said that God did not dwell in temples made by the hands of men, quoting the Scriptures themselves (Acts 7:48-50 according to Isaiah 66:1), and accused them of killing the Messiah, they were angry and also killed Stephen for speaking the truth and reporting the error (Acts 7:54-60).

That same furor that led the Jewish priests to kill Stephen, continued to contaminate the religious leaders of that time to persecute and kill the true worshipers, while the false ones thought that all that was justified.

However, Jesus had prophesied that it would happen (John 16:1-3) because those who did it did not know the true God and his Son. They might even have a concept of God, but they didn't know the true God and His Son, the only ones who deserve worship.

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For this reason, the apostles and early Christians met in the homes of those who accepted the gospel (Acts 8:3 and 16:40; Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2) because the true church did not need to be confined to the magnificent walls of the Jewish temple, and they would not last long either, as Jesus himself prophesied (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2 and Luke 21:6).

However, I do not mean to say that anyone who attends a religious temple is lost, but this has been increasingly difficult to reconcile with those who want to follow true worship, as religions have followed their own traditions more than the Word and the Commandments of God, leading us to confirm to this day what Jesus said in His time:

“These people approach me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines that are the precepts of men.” Matthew 15:8-9.

An idle worship is an invalid worship. In a sense, it may even be considered worship by religious leaders, by society, by relatives, friends and governments, but not by God. Jesus was quoting the text from Isaiah 29:13, and we realized that if in the time of the prophet Isaiah it was like this, if in Jesus’ time it was like that, in the last and most sinful generation it would not be different, but, worse.

The religions of today are so loaded with traditions that are totally contrary to the true principles of worship, that what they are doing is to worship their own systems, created by themselves, than to worship the true God and His only Son. Just as the Tower of Babel was created to institute a false system of worship, religions have been creating their towers with their false belief systems, similar but totally contradictory to the simplest truths in the Bible.

For example, Jesus taught that we should not expose the good we do to others in public (Matthew 6:1-4). However, a large part of the denominations and their members delight in

showing their “good works” before men to be seen and honored by them.

Another example is regarding prayers, which are offered in an exhibitionistic and standing manner, without the proper reverence of falling on your knees as directed in the Scriptures (1 Kings 8:54; 2 Chronicles 29:28-30; Psalms 95:6; Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 20:36 and 21:5; Ephesians 3:14; Philippians 2:10).

But today the disrespectful standing prayer form of modern hypocrites reigns (Matthew 6:5), who think they are in charge and God is obliged to obey them. These distorted traditions and customs, totally at odds with the simple and clear teachings of the Word of God, have made the worship taught and practiced in the current religions to be totally in vain (Matthew 15:9).

Do you want to continue worshiping God in vain? Why then don't decide to break with these practices, even if it costs you to be expelled from the temples? That's what happened to me when I decided to break with tradition and stay with worship in spirit and in truth, as Jesus directed the Samaritan woman.

When I understood that there was no way to reconcile what the Lord says with what the pastor says, I had to make a choice. When I discovered that it was impossible to reconcile what the Word says with what the church says, I had to choose what is right, even if it resulted in being expelled from the “synagogue” as Jesus had prophesied it would happen (John 16: 1-3).

At this point there is no middle ground, because if the Bible directs us to obey pastors (Hebrews 13:17), it is even more important to obey God than to men (Acts 5:29), even more men who are turned away from the truth (Titus 1:14); and if congregating is important (Hebrews 10:25) more important is to be congregating with two or three in the name of Jesus than to be congregating in large numbers of people who follow a false system of worship (Matthew 18:20).

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Jesus taught that true worship is to his Father, and when He Himself was worshiped he did not say it was wrong. However, Jesus never taught that we should worship a god made up of three people (the infamous Trinity).

However, the overwhelming majority of religions teach that we are to worship a trine or triune God, while in the Bible we are told to worship a single God and His only Son.

We will understand this a little better with biblical references. Once a Pharisee asked Jesus which was the greatest of the commandments, we will read this account in its entirety in the following text:

“And one of the Scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him: Which is the first commandment of all?”

“And Jesus answered him: The first of all the commandments is: Heare, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is none other commandment greater then these.

“And the Scribe said unto him: Well master, you have said the truth, for there is one God, and there is none other but He. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more then all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

“And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, You are not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that dare to ask him any question.” (Mark 12:28-34) (emphasis added).

Note that at this point Jesus and the Pharisees were in perfect agreement, because just as they believed that God is unique and not triune, Jesus believed that God the Father was and remains the only God. See this other text:

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“These words spake Jesus, and lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternall life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternall, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” John 17: 1-3; (emphasis added).

It is clear, isn't it? However, many believe that Jesus spoke this symbolically, or that he spoke it in opposition to the false gods, or even believe that the single word here is a compound unit, but there is no way to deny or misrepresent, without guilt, such a clear text in that in a prayer to the Father, Jesus affirms that He is the only true God, and whoever believes in this and believes in Him as His sent Son is a matter of eternal life, of salvation.

However, a god forged in the ecumenical councils of antiquity became so strong in religious concepts that it gained the status of the true God and continues to be worshiped ignorantly in the most varied Christian and even pagan religions, because the triune god is not an original idea of Christianity, but is the idea it imported from paganism.

However, in Jesus' teachings there is no jot or tittle of support for this false god who has been widely worshiped for many years. On the contrary, Jesus affirms in many texts that God is unique and not triune, but religions say that He is unique and triune. This word triune does not even exist in Scripture referring to God, but it was forged to support a lie, and it has been strengthened over the years through tradition, which as we have seen has led many to worship God in vain (Matthew 15:9).

In fact, not only that word (triune), but many others, such as: Trinity, Triune God, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, coeternal, coequal, consubstantial, omniscient, omnipresent, etc.). All of these terms are in one way or another associated with the dogma of the Trinity, however none of them are in the Holy Scriptures, but only in the books of religious beliefs.

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I challenge the interested reader to do this research on a Bible website on the internet or even on a mobile application. Putting the words I mentioned in the search space of these programs, you will have the disappointment or the grateful confirmation of ratifying what I write to you.

I don't want to deceive you, but the truth is that many people like to be deceived, so God allows the operation of error (2 Thess. 2:11-12) to keep them stuck in the lie, because they didn't want to believe the truth. This is, unfortunately, the condition of many religious who are deceived by false worship.

But if you are reading this book right now, if you don't want to continue being deceived, do as I did, research for yourself, don't depend on your pastor, priest, bishop, or any other man. I suggest that you even question yourself and question what you have been taught over the years, going deeper into the study of the Bible, because no one will have excuses for losing themselves with the truth of the Scriptures in their hands.

Another text that Jesus quoted regarding the one God is: *How can you believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that come from God only?* John 5:44. [The portuguese version 'Almeida Revista e Atualizada' render this verse as "the one God" instead of "from God only" (translator note)].

Are you a person who seeks the glory of others? Do you like compliments? Recognition? Perhaps because of a talent for singing, preaching the Word, or even writing. Do you let those things go to your head and flatter you? Be careful, as many religious people of the time of Christ did this and despised the one God who was and continues to be worthy of all glory alongside His Son (Revelation 4:11; 5:12; 5:13; 7:10).

We live in a time of a stardom gospel, of apostles who are not apostles, but are liars and fraudulent (2 Corinthians 11:13; Revelation 2:2) and of believers who are no better than the devil himself and his angels, for they too are believers, because they believe that God exists and that He is one (James 2:19).

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But it doesn't have to go on like this, at least in your life, if you want to break with the whole false system of worship and become a true worshiper.

Read on, if that's what you want.

Chapter 10

Universal declaration of worship

Jesus was a great teacher. He taught us that His God, and His Father, is also our God and our Father (John 20:17). He taught us that he was not omnipotent and equal to His God and Father (John 14:28; 13:16; 17:3), he taught us that His power was bestowed on him by the Father, the latter being the source of all power (Matthew 28:18; John 14:10; Acts 1:6-7).

However, many do not understand Jesus' teachings, or interpret them differently from what He actually taught, which is why there are many religions professing his name.

As we have argued in this book, only true worshipers are accepted in what they do for God, as are Abel and not Cain. But many are supposing that they really worship Him.

In this chapter, I want to consider the contrast between true and false worship in the final scenes of the history of this earth. Everything was prophesied in the Scriptures, especially in the book of the apostle John, called Revelation.

In this book we can observe important revelations on the theme of worship, making comparisons with everything we have studied so far on this subject.

At the beginning of the book we discovered important facts regarding the celestial hierarchy, that is, the existence of order and variation of power in the celestial courts. We read the following in the first verse of Revelation:

“Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass; and by his angel he sent and notified it to his servant John.”
Revelation 1:1.

If we analyze this first verse of Revelation properly, ready we can see that there is no third person from an alleged Trinity to participate in the process of delivering the revelation

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of this book, that is, the Revelation reached John following the sequence: God - Jesus Christ - angel - John. This, in turn, passed on the message to the seven churches (Rev 1:4).

Why does the alleged third person of the Trinity not appear in the process of delivering this revelation? Simply because the Holy Spirit is not the third person of the Trinity as many believe.

Throughout the book of Revelation we will see Father and Son as the only ones worthy of worship, both in heaven and on earth, both by human beings and by angelic beings.

This is something that the most varied denominations of Christianity do not teach, as they defend the worship of a triune god that does not appear anywhere in the Scriptures. You might be thinking: but doesn't the Bible speak of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Yes, the Bible is full of quotes to them, but at no time does it authorize us to worship the Holy Spirit as a third divine person. As we said earlier, the Bible indicates that only God the Father and His only begotten Son are to be worshiped and are worthy of all honor, praise, glory and worship.

In the last book of the Bible, written by the last living apostle of Jesus Christ, the truth of worship is even more evident. That is what we are going to deal with in this chapter and the final contrast between true and false worshipers.

Some people totally disagree with what I say here, and still point verses right after what I presented to justify the *Trinitarian* doctrine in this text. When verse four of the first chapter of Revelation mentions the *seven spirits*, many see there an evidence of the Holy Spirit, understanding the number seven as a symbolic number representing perfection.

However, if we use this form of interpretation, we will also have to understand the seven seals, the seven churches, the seven trumpets, the seven plagues, all as symbolic numbers, and not in that exact quantity, which is not true as can be noticed when seeing detailed in the apocalyptic book the description of each of the seven items mentioned.

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What would the *seven spirits* be then? Some understand it to be seven angels, as the word *spirit* can also be used for angels (Hebrews 1:13-14). Others believe that it is the seven spiritual attributes mentioned in Isaiah 11:1-2. Anyway, one thing is certain: the seven spirits are not a reference to the Holy Spirit. And even if it was, why is he quoted in verse 4 and does not appear in the process of delivering the message of Revelation to John in verse 1? It is, therefore, evident that he is not a divine person worthy of worship, not only for these verses, but for many others that we will see later.

Verse six is practically a worship quote, which says: “*And has made us kings and priests to God and his Father; glory and power to him forever and ever. Amen.*” Revelation 1:6. As we can see, in this verse it is said “*to him*” and not “*to them*”. And the subject of the sentence is the Father, who in this verse appears as the only God and Father of Jesus Christ.

However, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not the only one who appears in the book of Revelation as worthy of worship. The Lamb of God, the One who shed his blood for us, appears on the pages of the last book of the Bible as worthy of worship together with the Father.

The Holy Spirit, however, does not appear as a third person of the *Trinity* receiving worship together with God the Father and His only begotten Son. Why does this not appear in the book of Revelation or in all other Scriptures?

Simply because the “third person” does not exist. The most favorable text for this supposed third person is found in John’s first epistle (1 John 5:7-8).

This text is no longer found in several Bibles such as the New International Version (NIV), the Jerusalem Bible (BJ), TEB Bible (Ecumenical Bible Translation) and a series of other translations and versions that preferred to remove the quotations “*in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three who testify in Earth.*” (1 John 5:7-8).

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This was done because it was discovered that these words were a later addition, not appearing in any other manuscript prior to the 12th century.

This is easily understandable when we see that the apostle John repeatedly mentions only the Father and the Son in the context of worship. See the examples:

“That we have seen and heard, we announce to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:3.

“Who is the liar, but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is the antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son the same have not the Father; but he who acknowledge the Son has the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” 1 John 2: 22-24.

As we have seen, true communion is with the Father and the Son, and not with a trine God (or triune as many say). Another important detail in John’s writings is that denying the existence of the *Trinity* is not a big problem. The big lie is to deny the Father and the Son, even if a “*third person*” is introduced in the middle, whom many believe to be the “God Holy Spirit” of the doctrine of the *Trinity*.

However, the Bible never calls the Holy Spirit “God the Holy Spirit”, but rather, the Spirit of God. That is why the Holy Spirit appears in no passage of Scripture to receive worship. Neither the Father nor the Son commands the Holy Spirit to be worshiped. God the Father orders His Son Jesus Christ to be worshiped (Hebrews 1:6) and Jesus in turn commands God the Father to be worshiped (Matthew 4:10). I challenge any reader to find some biblical reference that orders to worship an alleged third person of a *Trinity*. This text does not exist in the Scriptures.

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As we have addressed in this book the theme of worship, the truth is evident that the vast majority of conventional religions have taught a kind of worship that is apparently true, but is nothing more than appearance, because the communion he proposes is with a triune god, and not with the Father and the Son as quoted in 1 John 1: 3.

What kind of worship will you, the reader, continue to practice? This is a very important question if you care about your salvation. The Bible is the only one that can give you this answer with the certainty of not being deceived by any man or institution. Confirm your personal answer in all the texts that we have presented so far, and in the next ones.

Returning to the book of Revelation, we are informed by divine revelation that worship is something serious, embracing and destined for the only beings in the universe worthy of it, and therefore, the only ones who should be worshiped. In the fourth chapter of Revelation appears the first Being worthy of worship, in the fifth chapter appears the second Being who is also worthy of being worshiped, and at the end of Chapter Five the two appear together in this universal declaration of worship.

“And the four living beings had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within, and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those living beings give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who live for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that live for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for you have created all things, and by your will they are and were created.” Revelation 4:8-11.

As we saw in the first text we quoted from chapter four of Revelation, the first being that appears in the universal declaration of worship is Almighty God, the Father, the One who sits on the throne and lives forever and ever.

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The Bible is very simple to understand when it comes to worship, as we have seen so far, despite the fact that many worship a triune god, without such a god appearing in Scripture as to be worshiped. Now we will see who is the second to be also worthy of worship and why this should happen.

“And I looked, and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and the living beings, and the elders; and their number was millions of millions, and thousands of thousands, who with a loud voice said: Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” Rev 5:11-12.

We also see that there is another Being who, like God our Father, is worthy of being worshiped because he died for us, for our salvation. That Being is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36). This clashes with some Unitarian ideas that state that only one Being, God the Father, needs to be worshiped.

We see, however, some differences between these two Beings that the Bible points out as being to be worshiped. One is declared to live forever, the other is declared to have been killed. This is in complete agreement with a statement by Paul regarding both Father and Son, God and the Lamb, with regard to the Father being the only one who has immortality and which will be revealed on Jesus' return, matching the statement of Revelation that the Almighty is also the One who *“will come”* (Rev 4:8):

“I give you charge in the sight of God, who quickens all things, and Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. That you keep this commandment without blemish, unrebukeable, until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in His time will show the blessed, and only mighty Lord, King of kings and Lord of lords; who only has immortality, and dwells in the inaccessible light; whom none of men have seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.” 1 Timothy 6:13-16.

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It is possible to clearly see the distinction between the two. One died, the other is immortal. One has been seen, the other is invisible. However, both will come to this earth for judgment and retribution, both to the wicked and the righteous, and one (Jesus) will reveal the other (God the Father).

Therefore, the apocalyptic revelation with the universal declaration of worship must be respected and obeyed by all those who want to worship in spirit and in truth, for this is the worship that the Father desires (John 4:23-24). Whoever worships a triune God, alien to the revelation of Scripture, is worshipping what he does not know. The Holy Spirit exists, but it is not the third person of a Trinity worthy of worship. It is a gift from God Himself, for it proceeds from Him (Luke 24:49; John 15:26; Acts 2:33 and 38).

The apostle and prophet John, then, exiled on the lonely island of Patmos concludes in this way the universal declaration of worship to the only Beings worthy of it, let's see:

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying: Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living beings said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that live for ever and ever.” Revelation 5:13-14 (emphasis added).

Who can fight this universal truth? Is this clear and patent truth to all beings in infinite space? However, a rebellious being who has been expelled from heaven has struggled with this truth, but he is already defeated (Rev 12:7-12).

However, even defeated, he continues to keep countless people trapped in the deception that there is a Trinity to be worshiped. For that he uses the “man of sin” that we already mentioned in the chapter “Change of luck”. The man of sin is the one who is the head in apostasy, who leads the rest of the earth to rebel against God's commandments.

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The Bible declares that sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), therefore, the “man of sin” is one who not only transgresses, but is a great world religious leader who promotes this transgression, especially in a veiled way, with the appearance of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5).

This man has been replaced century after century in the so-called “apostolic succession”, however, none of the apostles taught disobedience to the law of God.

The “man of sin,” however, teaches not only how to worship a Trinity, but he teaches that the day of rest is Sunday and not Saturday. In the law of God, however, we read in the first commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3).

If God were triune, as many believe because they were wrongly taught, the command would be: “*You shall have no other gods before us.*” But that is not what God wrote with His finger on tablets of stone. Men can write whatever they want in their religious books. What God wrote in stone, however, is immutable, serving today and for all eternity, for the psalmist said that the law of God is eternal (Psalm 139:151-152). The Son of God himself obeyed His Father’s law (St. John 15:10) and said that no letter should be removed from the law, but rather obeyed (Matthew 5:17-19).

The “man of sin”, also called by the apostle Paul “son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), assuming himself as the “Vicar of Christ” on earth, not only transgressed the commandments, but maintained the adulteration that was done to them by their predecessors, which was predicted by the prophet Daniel (7:25) to happen. That is why we see the so-called Christian churches following and practicing a worship that Christ Himself never taught.

When the prophet Daniel made this prediction, the power represented by the “man of sin” did not exist. When the apostle Paul also pronounced his prediction, this apostate power had not yet appeared, but it would arise from a power that was already

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dominant: the Roman empire. And that was a matter of time. A few years later a political and religious power arose that dared to change the law of God, removing the Elder of days (Daniel 7: 9, 13) from its supremacy and placing in its place a Trinity of gods to be worshiped.

He also removed the Sabbath as a day of rest instituted by God at creation (Genesis 2:1-3) and as a commandment of God's law (Exodus 20:8-11) to establish the day of the sun (Sunday) as a day of rest for all of Christendom. All of this happened at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. And is widely known in general history.

Thus, over the years, this political and religious power has been consolidated, with false worship, and with the persecution and extermination of true worshipers. Like Cain, the first false worshiper killed his brother, the papal system murdered many true worshipers in the Middle Ages. But God has always kept some remnants supporting His eternal truth.

This is a brief summary of the story, but anyone who is unaware of how it all happened can consult several history books that reveal these events.

In Scripture we have enough information to form our concepts of worship, to know who should be and who should not be worshiped. However, in addition to teaching worship to a god that does not exist in Scripture, the "man of sin" himself accepts worship by allowing other men to pay him reverence. This reverence is a "right" acquired by tradition throughout the history of those who assumed the role of bishop of Rome.

However, Paul, the Roman apostle, did not accept any reverence when they wanted to worship him (Acts 14). Behavior different from those who are called "Fathers" and "Popes", because they accept honors and reverences that clash with the clearest statements of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said to the apostles:

"But be not you called Rabbi: for one is your Master, the Christ, and all you are brethren. And call no man your father

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upon the Earth, for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be you called masters, for one is your Master, who is the Christ.”
Matthew 23:8-10.

The words “Padre” and “Papa” are expressions in the Italian language that mean “father”, and they are in a position of “spiritual parents” for a community of believers who should have only God as Father and only Jesus as Master.

This, however, is not an exclusive error of Catholicism, Protestants (who no longer protest), also called evangelicals, pay honor to their leaders who teach them to worship a *triune god*. These teachers “are shepherds that cannot understand” (Isaiah 56:11) and are often teachers and doctors in theology, yet their Word of God says:

“I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, at his coming and in his kingdom; preach the word, urge in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside to fables.” 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

The truth that God the Father and His only begotten Son are the only ones worthy of worship is unbearable to many ears and the eyes of many readers. But as we saw in this prophecy of the apostle Paul, this would really happen with a people who would surround themselves with “teachers” and “doctors” to teach them to worship a triplet god, that is, three co-eternal without Father and Son affiliation.

This book was not written to mock your faith, for God has many people who in their sincerity are willing to do God’s will. But God’s will is not subject to the will of men turned away from the truth.

If you have learned that we are to worship a triune god while the Bible says we are to worship the one true God and His only begotten Son, then you need to choose who you will

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continue to worship from now on.

Many men are assuming for themselves what is the prerogative of God and His Son only. Many are called “reverend”, but Peter left us a great example when another man (Cornelius) tried to worship him, not accepting that he bowed down to him (Acts 10:25-26).

Not even an angel accepted that John, the apostle and prophet, bowed down to him to revere him. The angel coming from heaven to minister to him, said not to do that, because he was a fellow servant of John and the other brothers (Revelation 19:10).

However, many religious leaders accept honors that are due only to God and his Son. They are not only teaching false doctrines but accepting undue honor in deception.

Perhaps you may be confused by all this, as you thought that the Holy Spirit is really a third person of the Trinity and the day of guard is Sunday. But I want to tell you that the Holy Spirit can often appear as a person, as he is the Spirit of God or of Christ, but never of a third person (Romans 8:9). The Bible says that God is a Spirit, that is, a spiritual Being (John 4:23-24). The Bible also says that God gives us the Spirit of His Son (Galatians 4: 6) and that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:6-7; Philippians 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11).

Thus, it is clear to us that if the Holy Spirit were indeed a third person besides the Father and the Son, he would appear in the Scriptures in a context of worship, however this does not happen.

We will confirm this truth in other passages.

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And all the angels stood around the throne, and about the elders and the four living beings, and fell before

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the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be to our God for ever and ever. Amen.”
Revelation 7:9-12.

We see clearly that in this universal declaration of worship in Revelation, salvation is a feat accomplished by our God who is seated on the throne and the Lamb (v.10). So they are the only ones who are worthy of worship in the entire universe. If the Holy Spirit were really a third person of a co-eternal Trinity as many believe, would he not appear as deserving universal acclaim for participating in the plan of salvation? Certainly yes. But that is not what happens.

I have heard a pastor saying that he believed that the Holy Spirit is a more humble “God”, that he does not want to be worshiped, is content to stay behind the scenes. But how much ignorance! Can it not be said of these blind guides: “You are wrong not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God”? (Mt 22:29).

I prefer to stay with the “Thus says the Lord” and not with “so says the shepherd”. What about you? Will you continue to think that this has nothing to do, like many other things you usually ignore?

In the meantime, we can collect and expose sufficient scriptural evidence to support our belief that only the Father and the Son should be exalted and worshiped for eternity.

In contrast to true worship is a large group of human beings who will not surrender to true worship, but will continue to worship what is not God. In spite of all the warnings against such an attitude, and the punishments it will entail on the unrepentant, see what is reported in Revelation about false worshipers:

“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood, which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk, neither repented they of their murders, nor of their

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sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts". Revelation 9:20-21.

Impressive isn't it? There are people who, even in the face of serious consequences, choose to remain in a false worship of demons and idols.

Many worship demons without a sense that they are in fact worshipping demons. Some are in fact Satanists, and they give their lives to demons in the greatest certainty of what they are doing. But the enemy of souls is more, much more subtle with a greater number of people, inducing them to perverted worship, making worshipers think they are worshipping God.

That is why many will say that they have done many things in the name of Jesus, but he will say to them: "*I never knew you, depart from me you cursed...*" (Matthew 7:21-23; 25:41). Being deceived and worshipping demons are not recent things, see:

"They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not". Deuteronomy 32:17.

"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils." I Corinthians 10:20.

See how serious the issue of worship is. Moses said that many Israelites worshiped demons, not God. Paul also said that Christians were at risk of participating in false worship with the Gentiles. What about us? Are we not at risk? Definitely yes.

So we need to know what kind of worship we are practicing.

Did the apostle and prophet John know or did he not know whom we should worship? Certainly so, because he received this knowledge directly from Jesus, to the point of saying:

"That which we have seen and heard, declare we to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3.

That is why, prophetically, on the occasion of the seventh and last trumpet he said:

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“And the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, which are, and was, and are to come, because you have taken your great power, and have reigned.

“And the nations were angry, and your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and the time to give the reward to the servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to those who fear your name, to small and great; and the time to destroy them which destroy the Earth.” Rev 11:15-18.

John, the beloved disciple (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20) living centuries later than the psalmist, agrees with him, for the apostle and prophet John says that the kingdoms of world have become the Lord’s and His Christ’s. And he also says that the nations were angry. The psalmist in turn said the following:

“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree, the Lord hath said unto me, You are my Son; this day have I begotten you. Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Be wise now therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” Psalm 2:1-12.

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We see clearly in this Psalm that the contention of the peoples is against the Lord and his anointed, that is, his only begotten Son, and not against a Trinity. The Trinity is what they want.

Just as the psalmist says that the Son of God will rule the nations with an iron rod, John in Revelation says:

“And he that overcome, and keeps my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father.” Rev 2:26-27.

Many think and teach that the anointed one from Psalm two is David, but John in Revelation confirms that this is a reference to the Son of God (see Acts 4:25-28).

In this text we see that just as He received this position to rule the nations with an iron rod, so the saved, those who overcome, will receive the same position.

Another privilege that the saved will receive with the Son of God is this one: *“To him that overcome will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”*. Revelation 3:21.

Have you found the throne of the Holy Spirit in the Bible? As you reflect on that question, see one more universal acclaim of worship to the Father and the Son, to God and to the Lamb in the book of Revelation:

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” Rev 12:10.

Have you ever been accused of preaching the truth that God is only one and not a Trinity? Or have you been on the other side, the accuser, saying that those who defend this Scriptural truth are people used by Satan?

In this text of Revelation we see clearly that at a certain moment in the history of this earth, the universal declaration of worship will be proclaimed: *“Now is come salvation, and*

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strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.” Had John, the disciple and prophet of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgotten a third person in this universal acclaim?

There are too many texts to believe that he has forgotten. We see that in fact worship is due to God and Christ and not to a “trine god” or “triune” as they say.

Which side will you be on? Of those who, even in the face of harsh consequences, will not regret the false worship practiced? Or of those who will come together in unison in a cry of universal declaration of worship to God and the Lamb, the Father and His only begotten Son? It’s your choice.

Here we are just showing you that from Genesis to Apocalypse the theme of worship has been divided only into these two poles, waiting for choices for true worship in the midst of as much religious confusion as our time.

The Beast, that power that changed the law of God and taught the nations to worship a Trinity, also changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, will cause everyone at some point in history to worship him by imposing a decree. This is prophesied in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation. In the next chapter of this book we have a warning against such worship.

This warning is given through three messages. In it we see the urgency of a true understanding about the true worship so that God’s judgment does not find us as false worshipers of a corrupted system. Shall we better understand these three messages in the Revelation of John?

Chapter 11

Three urgent messages

If you were about to die and could be warned, it would certainly be nice to have an opportunity to escape, isn't it? And if I tell you that you may be on the edge of an abyss and there are appropriate warnings to get you out of perdition, would you believe it?

In the Bible we find this important proverb of Solomon: *“There is a way that seems right to man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”* Proverbs 14:12.

So far we have seen that the idea that God is a Trinity is contrary to the light of Scripture, and that the verses for believing in this concept are misleading inferences. But even so, many will prefer this path, thinking it is right, just as Cain preferred to offer fruit.

But what about warnings to get rid of death? Which ones are they? We find them in the book of Revelation.

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of Waters”. Rev 14:6-7.

Perhaps you might think: what does this have to do with warnings to get rid of death? We need to understand the context of the three messages to get the answer to that question. Let us then understand the first message, in the context of worship.

The three messages are presented as being proclaimed by angels. However, the task of preaching the gospel was not given to angels, but to men. In this context the word “angel”, which means messenger, is applied to men who proclaim the eternal

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gospel. Thus the word “angel” here is symbolic to indicate those who, like angels who are ministers of God (Hebrews 1: 13-14), also minister the preaching of the gospel (Matthew 24:14 and Mark 16:15-16).

Having understood this detail, we now need to understand the content of that message. What eternal gospel is this to be preached to all who dwell on the earth?

The message says to fear God and give him glory, for his judgment is about to come. The Bible explains to us the correct way to fear God. Let’s see what it is:

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole dut of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Ec 12:13-14.

As we have seen, fearing God and keeping his commandments is the duty of every man, but many have taught that Jesus abolished the commandments and that it is no longer necessary to obey them. This is claimed more in relation to the fourth commandment of the Law of God, which asks us to remember that the seventh day is the Sabbath that God blessed and sanctified.

But, how could Jesus have abolished God’s commandments if He obeyed them and commanded us to obey them? (see Matthew 5:17-19). It is impossible to have a legal basis for a judgment without a law. If the commandments were abolished, as many claim, by distorting some texts in the Bible (Colossians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:15), what will be the basis for divine judgment?

But, as we discussed earlier, these “ordinances” that Jesus abolished with his death on the cross were the laws of sacrifices, the Levitical commandments, and not the moral law that he clearly said he did not come to abolish (Matthew 5:17- 19).

Fearing God, therefore, has an intimate relationship with obedience to His commandments (Deut. 5:29; 17:19; 28:58).

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Once this part is understood, it is also important to understand to whom the first warning message contained in Revelation, chapter fourteen, orders to worship.

Was the creation of heaven, earth, sea and water sources a work of the Trinity? Many believe so, that a triune god created all things.

However, the Word of God shows us that the Father and the Son were involved in the creation process. We are not going to put in full all the texts that give notice of this here, but the interested reader and researcher can study some texts that affirm that creation is a work done by God the Father and His Son (Pv 30:4; John 1:1-3; Col 1:13-16; Heb 1:1-2).

Another text that presents the context of creation is that of Proverbs 8:22-30, where the Son of God is metaphorically called Wisdom, and Paul reveals that the “Wisdom” of God is Jesus Himself (1 Corinthians 1:24 and 30; see also Matthew 11:19; Luke 11:49 compare with Matthew 23:34-36). The text of Prov. 8 proves that in the beginning, before there was a world, there were God and His Wisdom, that is, his Son.

Texts that apparently say that there was a “third person” in the creation are just hypotheses. One is Genesis 1:2 which says that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. In some translations like the Jerusalem Bible and the EBT Bible (Ecumenical Bible Translation) this text says that a “wind of God” hovered over the waters, and “wind” is one of the meanings of the word “spirit” in the Hebrew and Greek.

Other texts that present this same idea regarding the Holy Spirit in the context of creation are: Job 32:8; 33:4; 34:14 and 15 and Psalm 104:29-30, where the Spirit present in creation is the divine breath that gives life (see Genesis 2:7).

Therefore, the first warning contained in Revelation 14:7 commands us to worship Him who created everything through His only begotten Son, and who said to him: “*Let us make man in our image ...*” (Genesis 1:26).

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God's first warning in the message of Revelation 14:6-7 is a warning as to whom should be worshiped: the creator God. Here's something important about this:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Jehovah thy God; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it”. Exodus 20:8-11; (emphasis added).

If we compare this text with that of Revelation 14:6-7, we will see that the order to worship the one who created heaven, earth, sea and water sources is in direct connection with the fourth commandment of God's law. It also tells us that the Creator of all things is a unique and personal God called Jehovah. However, this personal God created all things through His only-begotten Son and in union with Him (John 1:1-3; Col 1:13-17; Heb 1:1-2).

Jesus was once accused of transgressing the Sabbath because he healed a man that day. However, Jesus' response to his accusers shows us that those who worked on creation, instituted the Sabbath, and continue to work on human subsistence are two Beings and not three.

“And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do; for what things soever he does, these also does the Son likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shew him all things that himself

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does; and he will shew him greater works than these, that you may Marvel.” John 5:16-20.

In this excerpt from the Holy Scriptures we see clearly that the God who worked in creating everything was the Father of our Lord Jesus. But, not only His Father, He also said that He works with His Father until now, in the sense that They, Father and Son, work in the maintenance of the created works.

“*Fear God and give glory to him ...*” (Rev 14:7) is an act of worship to the Father. “*And worship him that made ...*” is an act of worship to the Son, for without Him, was not any thing made that was made (John 1:3) and through him everything was created (Hebrews 1:2).

As for the sentence “*for the hour of his judgment is coming*” (Rev 14:7), it points us again to both: Father and Son, because in the judgment scene seen by Daniel appears the Elder of days and one as Son of the Man (Daniel 7:9-14).

Jesus stated that the Father gave Him the power to judge, because He is the Son of man (John 5: 22-30. See also Acts 17: 30-31). It is then proven by the Scriptures that the first angel’s message, an important warning message, declares the truth about the Father and the Son in the context of creation, worship and judgment.

This is the eternal gospel that must be preached throughout the world. The gospel of the Father’s love in giving His only Son to redeem fallen humanity (John 3:16). The gospel that creation, redemption and judgment are works of the Father and the Son and not of a Trinity.

See what the apostle Paul says about the difference between the true and false gospel in the letter to the Galatians:

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead; and all the brethren which are with me, to the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of

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God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”.

“I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed”. Galatians 1:1-9.

As we have seen, Paul said that he was an apostle not from men, but from Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead. He does not name a third party on the part of whom he was also made an apostle. Likewise when he greets the Galatians, he does so with the grace and peace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and not a third party. Paul wrote the following about who Christians recognized as God:

“For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be many gods, and many lords), but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him”. 1 Corinthians 8:5-6 (emphasis added).

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”. 1 Timothy 2:5-6 (see also Romans 16:27; Ephesians 4:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:13-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-4).

As we have seen, the eternal, authentic, true gospel is not that a Trinity loved the world, but that God the Father loved the world and sent His Son to save it (John 3:16). Salvation is an act of God and the Lamb (Rev 7:10) and not of a triune god.

Therefore, worship is a key point in the first warning message contained in Revelation 14: 6-7. This message is in total opposition to the worship that the beast proposes (Rev 13:15) with the threat of death to those who do not accept its mark.

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In order to understand this contrast a little better, and what consists in worshipping the image of the beast, let us analyze the second warning message in the apocalyptic sequence.

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Rev 14:8.

The fall of ancient Babylon was one of the most impressive historical events. While Belshazzar profaned the utensils of the temple of the true God, paying homage to the false gods of Babylonia, the Persian army was diverting the course of the Euphrates River to invade Great Babylon by the dry riverbed. This was the literal fall of Babylon that occurred before John’s prophecy.

However, the warning of the fall of Babylon that we have in Rev 14:8 is a comparison to a false system of worship that will also fail. As I reported in chapter seven of this book, the false worship imposed under death penalty by Nebuchadnezzar in his empire, Babylon, contrasted true and false worship.

The apostle Peter quotes a church in Babylon (1 Peter 5:13), but in his day it was not Babylon who ruled the world, but Rome. The footnote of the Jerusalem Bible is certain of this, which states that the church mentioned by Peter is a church in Rome.

We understand, therefore, that Rome is metaphorically called Babylon because it is a great empire that dominated the world in Peter’s time, just as Babylon was in Daniel’s time.

The prophet John also said that the great city that reigns over the kings of the earth is a city surrounded by seven hills (Rev 17: 9, 18). That city is Rome, the city of the seven hills, where the Vatican with the world headquarters of the Catholic Church is located.

The fall of Babylon announced in Revelation, therefore, must apply to a false system of worship implanted by Rome that was perpetuated in history and that, following the example of Nebuchadnezzar in ancient Babylon, uses sculpture images in his religious rituals. We have no other explanation but Roman

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Catholic worship with the use of images and sculptures and also of a triune god, which stands in stark contrast to the worship of the true God and His only begotten Son, as seen so far, proven in the Scriptures.

Babylon was guilty of forcing men to worship an image built by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3). The proud king had indisputable proof that no God could deliver like the God of the three young Hebrews, for He sent His own Son to be with the faithful youth in the fiery furnace and no harm happened to them (Daniel 3:23-28).

At the end of his life, after reluctance to surrender to the Sovereign of the universe, this proud monarch humbled himself and recognized who the true God was and the only one worthy of worship. For that he needed to live like an animal and literally graze, eat grass for seven years (Daniel 4:33), to recognize that the Most High is the Sovereign (Daniel 4:34-37).

His son, Belshazzar, despite knowing all this, did not choose to practice true worship, but continued to exalt gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood and stone (Daniel 5:18-31). That is why Babylon fell, and its fall was great, being conquered by King Darius (Daniel 5:30-31).

The fall of mystical Babylon, the one that has given all nations a wine of false doctrines, such as the Trinity and Sunday rest, is worthy of the decree: "*Babylon has fallen!*" His fall is a spiritual fall, and that fall has been noticed blatantly in Revelation's warning 14:8.

Just as Belshazzar's Babylon fell and was defeated while practicing idolatry and desecrating the sacred utensils of the temple of the true God, the great end-time Babylon will fall and be defeated at the height of its false worship system imposed on the whole world.

Another text that indicates that the Roman church is the mystical Babylon is the seventeenth chapter of Revelation. In it we are informed of the existence of an adulterous "woman", symbol of a people who profess to serve God, but nevertheless

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betray Him by practicing false worship (cf. Jeremiah 13:27 and Ezekiel 23:37).

This “woman” (church) is presented in Revelation with the following detail:

“And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.” Revelation 17:5.

Why does the word *Mystery* appear on the forehead of great Babylon? It is because from a young age children are taught to record in their minds (forehead, frontal lobe) a series of teachings called *Mysteries*: joyful mysteries, painful mysteries, glorious mysteries and luminous mysteries.

To which church does this description properly apply if not the Roman Catholic, which also teaches that the doctrine of the Trinity is the central mystery of the Catholic faith?

She is also called *“The mother of harlots”* because she is not the only prostituted woman (church). The other denominations that follow him, intoxicated with his doctrinal wine, give the same justification when stating that this teaching (that of the Trinity) is a “mystery” and will be better understood in heaven. However, the Trinity will never be taught in heaven, because in the previous chapter we saw that the universal declaration of worship is made to the almighty God and to the Lamb, and not to a triune god.

Therefore, the purpose of this divine warning contained in the second angel’s message is to alert the inhabitants of the earth about the failure (fall) of this false worship system symbolically called “Babylonia”. The third and final warning, contained in the third angel’s message is:

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy

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angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name.” Revelation 14:9-11.

Now do you understand why in the beginning I wrote that these warnings are to escape death? The conclusion of the three angelic messages, with the third, warns that false worshipers will be punished with fire and sulfur. So it is crucial to know what is true and false worship and to practice true.

Here much care and attention is needed to understand what the apostle John, under divine guidance, was talking about. He uses symbolic language, but we can clearly understand that he talks about worship, because he says: *“If any man worship...”*

In the first message (Rev 14:7) we understand that true worship is for the Father and His Son (Confirm in Rev 4:10-11; 5:12-14; 11:15-17). In the third message we see who should not be worshiped: the beast and its image:

1 st Message	3 rd Message
Worship	Do not worship
The Father and the Son	The beast and its image

Who is the beast? And your image? Did John mean that we shouldn't worship an ugly animal, an astonishing animal, and neither his image, nor his figure or portrait? No. That was not what the apostle and prophet John was trying to say.

It is important to remember that when the prophet John wrote the book of Revelation he was in exile on the island of Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev 1:9). If he spoke clearly that the beast was from Rome, perhaps the book would not have reached us today and

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was long since destroyed, since Rome dominated the world at the time.

But, as we have seen before, the symbol of the woman and the beast that carries her is a vivid depiction of Rome and Catholicism, because as we saw, John explained that the woman is the great city that in her time reigned over other kings of the earth (Rev 17:18), that is, it dominated the world.

This beast (Roman Catholicism) persecuted and killed millions of Christians during the Middle Ages and is said to be drunk with the blood of the saints (Rev 17:6). Her image will be a power that will copy in an identical way its arbitrary way of imposing false worship on all the inhabitants of the earth (Rev 13:11-18).

1st beast	2nd beast
Arises from the sea (Revelation 13:1)	Arises from the earth (Revelation 13:11)
Sea in prophecy means peoples, multitudes, nations and languages (Rev 17:15). The papacy arose from a place already densely populated: the old world (Europe).	This beast in turn arises from a different place from the previous one, from the land, from an uncivilized region: the new world (United States).
He waged war against the saints and overcame them. It had power over every tribe, language and nation (Rev 13: 7)	It imposes the mark of the beast on small and large, rich and poor, free and servants. (Rev 13:16)

We then have two beasts portrayed in Chapter 13 of Apocalypse. The second beast will form the “image of the beast” (of the first beast), as it follows in an identical way persecuting the faithful worshipers of God and His Son, supporting everything that the first beast created as a form of worship.

Just as Babylon created and imposed false worship on everyone, Rome, first with Caesar and then with the papacy,

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imposed a corrupted form of worship on the world. Finally, a new world power will imitate these previous powers in such a way that it is called in the prophecy “image of the beast”, because, in the same way, it will impose a false system of worship.

Let’s understand in more detail these two beasts:

It is undeniable how the papacy resumed its lost prestige when Napoleon Bonaparte took Pope Pius VI into captivity (Rev 13:10), inflicting a mortal wound on the papacy (Rev 13: 3). In our day the papacy has been honored by the American rulers themselves.

Something never seen before was witnessed in our time (September 24, 2015) when Pope Francis spoke in the American parliament. The American nation was formed by Christians who fled religious persecution in Europe in the 17th century and developed under Protestant principles.

However, the papacy has resumed its prestige among the current world power itself, which was born as one of its greatest opponents, the United States of North America.

Just as Babylon, the greatest world power at the time of Daniel, imposed a decree to worship the statue of Nebuchadnezzar on all world provinces, so will the greatest world power in the last days impose on everyone a false system of worship.

See in the comparative table:

Babylon	United States
World power in the time of Daniel	World power in the time of end
Nebuchadnezzar’s decree to worship his statue in the field of Dura, with the death penalty for anyone who opposed it. (Daniel 3:1-6).	Decree to worship the image of the beast (Imposition of false worship) and death penalty for those who oppose (Revelation 13:15).

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Deliverance of Misael, Ananias and Azariah from the fire furnace (Daniel 3:28).	Deliverance from those who remain faithful to true worship (Rev 15:2; 20:4).
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Unlike the image of Nebuchadnezzar in ancient Babylon, the image of the beast will be formed by copying the despotic and authoritarian model of papal Rome in the Middle Ages. Just as the papacy used civilian power to punish true worshipers, branding them heretics, and condemning them to bonfires with the support of civilian governments, the same will be done at the end of time by all religions, using the power of the state to punish those who do not accept the false worship to be imposed by law, first by the USA, then by the various nations. This false worship is opposite to the true one on two basic pillars: which God to serve and what day of rest to observe. While true worshipers will worship the one true God and His only begotten Son, observing the Sabbath as a day of rest, false worshipers, guided by the beast and his image, will have the Trinity as their God and Sunday as their day of rest.

The controversy that has always existed regarding worship at all times will intensify in the final days, making two distinct groups very clear. See the contrast in the table below:

True Worship	False Worship
One God	Triune God
God's Sign: Saturday, based on Scripture (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20)	Mark of the beast: Imposition of Sunday by law, based on tradition, Catholic catechism.
The Father and the Son	The beast and its image

If we look closely at the contrast between true and false worship throughout the biblical account, we can see that the Hebrews in the days of Esther served a single God and not a

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triune god and kept the Sabbath. In the days of Daniel and his exiled friends in Babylon likewise they worshiped a unique God (who even sent His Son to deliver them from the flames of the furnace (Daniel 3:25-28) and observed the Sabbath as a day of rest, and not Sunday.

Equally on the side of false worship, the worship of images has always been involved, as in the time of Ezekiel, when there was also a sealing and the worshipers of images and sculptures were not sealed (Ezekiel 8 and 9). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abdnego in their time, refused to worship the statue made by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:16-18). Mordecai refused to bow to Haman (Esther 3:1).

In our day and until the end is no different, some have resisted this false worship. Many, however, are bowing to men (religious leaders) and to images (sculptures and religious figures), paying reverence to things and people who are not worthy. As we have already mentioned and repeated, the only worthy ones are those to whom the Word of God says:

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for You have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created”. Revelation 4:11.

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”. Revelation 5:12.

No one else is worthy of being worshiped other than these, not even a perfect and enlightened angel from heaven, for when the apostle and prophet John tried to bow down to an angel who appeared to him, the angel said:

“And he saith to me, Write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith to me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See you do it not: I am your fellowservant, and of your brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Revelation 19:9-10.

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Likewise, Peter did not accept Cornelius to bow down to him and worship him (Acts 10:25-26). Likewise, Paul did not accept worship for the healings he did together with Barnabas (Acts 14:8-15).

However, the “man of sin”, the one who occupies the papal function, opposes God, accepting that other men bow down to him, thus revering him, “*shewing himself that he is God.*” 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

That is why the third angel’s message is so serious, because it warns those who want the salvation of God and to escape destruction by fire and sulfur to not worship the beast and its image.

It is also said in Revelation that the mark of the beast will be imposed on the world, prohibiting buying and selling those who do not have their mark on their hands or foreheads. This mark is not a stamp, tattoo, barcode or microchip. This mark is the opposite of the sign of God, the Sabbath (Exodus 31:13 and Ezekiel 20:20).

As we have seen, the sign of God is the Sabbath, for it is the commandment of God’s law that signals who the Creator is. The beast in turn instituted a day and a god contrary to the real ones: the triune god and Sunday. And when this day is imposed by law, then the mark of the beast will have been imposed.

I do not doubt that the microchip or any other mechanism can be used to control who can buy or sell as the prophecy says, but this will only be a tool in the service of the mark of the beast. The prophecy says:

“And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Rev 13:16 and 17.

As we have seen, this strategy will be more embracing than that of Haman in the time of Esther and Mordecai, and that of Nebuchadnezzar in the days of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and

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Azariah. This decree prohibiting buying or selling will affect everyone, small and large, rich and poor, free and slaves.

Let's understand a little more what this decree has to do with worship. As we know, the third angel's message is a warning against the risk of those who worship the beast and its image, receiving its mark on the forehead or on the hand (Rev 14:9-11).

I want to get you to understand the opposite of that, that is, the opposite of worshipping the beast and its image and receiving its mark. So let's look at a very enlightening text. After the transmission of the Law of God, the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5:1-21), and the handing over of that law to the Hebrews (Deut. 5:22-33), Moses proceeds to explain to them how they should deal with that law and pass it on to your children:

“Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your god commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land whither you go to possess it: That thou might fear the Lord your God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you and your son, and your son's son, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with you, and that you may increase mightily, as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you, in the land that flow with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart: And you shall teach them diligently to your children, 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. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates”. Deut. 6:1-9; (emphasis added).

The way in which God, through Moses, directed the Hebrews to instruct their children in His commandments, was to

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tie them up as signs in the hand and as frontlets between the eyes. Curious isn't it?

In the account we saw that Jehovah was presented as the only God and in His Law the seventh day is the Sabbath, appearing as the correct day of rest (Exodus 20:8-11 and Deut. 5:12-15). Principles like these that should be engraved on the forehead (mind) and hand (handling) of God's children are the principles that characterize worship according to God's will.

The opposite of this is what the beast (papacy) and its image (apostate Protestantism) proposes. Catholicism and other Christian religions practice a worship to the triune god and worship this god on Sundays as a day of guard. This is the contrast between true and false worship that will culminate in the decree to prohibit buying or selling anyone who does not surrender to this false system.

However, the third angel's message sends a warning notice to those who surrender to this false system of worship because their punishment will be death with fire and sulfur. Some understand that this punishment will be to suffer eternally, as the text says "they have no rest, neither day nor night ..." Rev 14:11 and 20:10.

However, the book of Revelation itself reveals to us that the fire from heaven will consume them (Rev 20: 9) and the prophet Malachi reveals to us that the wicked punished by fire will be burnt to the ground, leaving no roots or branches left (Malachi 4:1) and will become ashes under the feet of the righteous (Malachi 4:3).

That is why we need to record the truth on our forehead (mind) and not the lie. And if someone has recorded the lie on his forehead (mind), he must replace it with the study, memorization and practice of the truth.

Let's see this contrast in the table:

True Worship	False Worship
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Worship the Father and the Son	Worship the triune god
Sabbatical rest	Sunday rest
Worship God the Father and His only begotten Son	Worship men, images and sculptures.
The name of the Father is written on the forehead (Revelation 14:1)	Mystery has been written on the forehead (Mystery of the Trinity; Revelation 17:5)

The comparison is very simple, to the point that even a child can understand. The choice of worship to be practiced is personal and each one must choose who he wants to serve. Just as Elijah proposed to the people that they choose whom to serve, the third angel's message is a message preached in the spirit and power of Elijah, because it blatantly defines the difference between true and false Gods and proposes a choice.

There is no way to be neutral in this situation, or you are on one side or the other. No matter what choice your mother made, your father, your blood brothers, or any other relative, the choice is personal and will devolve on whoever made it.

Another very important comparison to be made is between the Law of God, contained in the Holy Scriptures (including Catholic Bibles) and the law modified by Catholicism, the law of God according to the Catholic catechism. Let's see:

Original God's Law	Adulterated God's Law
Source: Exodus 20: 1-17; (See also Dt 5: 6-21)	Source: Catechism of today's Catholic, 23rd ed., P.63-64

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<p>1. I am Jehovah your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.</p>	<p>1. Love God over all things.</p>
<p>2. You shall not make to you any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.</p>	<p>2. Do not take your holy name in vain.</p>
<p>3. You shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain.</p>	<p>3 Guard Sundays and guard parties.</p>

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<p>4. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.</p>	<p>4. Honor father and mother.</p>
<p>5. Honour your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God gives you.</p>	<p>5. Do not kill.</p>
<p>6. You shall not kill.</p>	<p>6. Do not sin against chastity.</p>
<p>7. You shall not commit adultery.</p>	<p>7. Do not steal.</p>
<p>8. You shall not steal.</p>	<p>8. Do not bear false witness.</p>
<p>9. You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbour.</p>	<p>9. Do not covet your neighbour's wife.</p>
<p>10. You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is your neighbour's.</p>	<p>10. Do not covet others' things.</p>

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As we have seen, the adulteration made in the Law of God was so great as to exclude the second commandment, which prohibits manufacture and venerating images of sculptures. This was done because the Catholic Church is a practitioner of the veneration of so-called “sacred images” that aim to portray religious people who were canonized by the church, thus obtaining the status of “saints”. To cover this exclusion of the second commandment, the tenth was divided into two.

Another commandment that has been tampered with concerns the day of guard. The change was made from Saturday to Sunday. This commandment is the only one of the ten that identifies Jehovah as the Creator God of all things, thus bringing the identity of the true God, His seal of authenticity.

This whole change in the Law of God had been prophesied. Let’s see: *“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws.”* Daniel 7:25.

This change was made by a power (horn) that emerged from the fourth animal of prophecy (Rome). This “little horn”, the papacy, was a power that persecuted and killed many Christians, *“and shall wear out the saints of the most High”* and changed the Law of God.

Of that same power that changed the Law of God, it was said that it *“cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.”* Daniel 8:12. In fact, the papacy was remarkably successful, consolidating Roman Catholicism as the most powerful religion on earth.

However, even if there is a certain prosperity in the practice of disobedience to the Law of God: *“Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.”* Ecclesiastes 8:12.

Another way for God to seal his people is with His own Law: *“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples”*. Isaiah 8:16 (Jr 31:33 and Eze 26:36-37). And more specifically

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with the fourth commandment of the Law, the Sabbath, as we saw earlier (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). So it was Roman Catholicism's intention to change the Law of God, to institute its own mark of authority, as opposed to that of God.

However, whoever submits to the papacy, or to any other religious leader, whoever he may be, and despises the truth and the Law of God to render obedience to a law other than the true one, puts his soul at risk, as we saw in the warning of the third angel's message (Rev 14:9-11).

Through His Spirit, God wants to seal His truth in us (Ezekiel 26:36-37; 2 Corinthians 1:22 and Ephesians 4:30), but this is our choice, it is up to us not to harden our hearts (Psalm 95:8 and Hebrews 3:7, 8, 13 and 15; 4:7).

We will then, in the last chapter, reflect a little more about the important decision that each one must make in this matter of great importance.

Chapter 12

Final decision

In view of all that has been written so far, I believe that there is no doubt about the worship that God requires of each one of us. God always made it very clear from the beginning what He wanted and wants.

It was like that with Adam and Eve, with his sons Cain and Abel, it was like that with all the patriarchs: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, in short, all to whom God revealed himself and taught His will.

However, many chose the wrong side, and suffered the consequences of their bad choices. It was like that with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:16-24), it was like that with Cain (Genesis 4:10-12), it was like that with the worshipers of the golden calf before Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:7-29), so it was with many others that we mentioned earlier and many that we did not mention.

However, the consequences of good choices are also evident in their results. So it was with Mordecai, Esther and their people freed from extermination in the days of Ahasuerus (Esther 9), with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah freed from being burned inside the furnace (Daniel 3:28) and with Daniel who was not devoured by the lions (Daniel 6:22-23).

But is it always that God delivers his faithful worshipers from death? No. John the Baptist was beheaded (Matthew 14:6-12), James, John's brother also died by the sword (Acts 12:1-2) and many others lost their earthly life, but guaranteed eternal life by being faithful to God (John 11:25; 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 4: 6-8; Revelation 2: 10-11; 20: 4-6). The big question is:

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”. Matthew 10:28.

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We need not fear if we are condemned to death for not wanting to accept false worship (Rev 13:15), for the same God who delivered Daniel from the lions' den and his three friends from the blazing fire furnace, can also deliver us, if so He wants. And if He doesn't want to, we need not fear those who can only kill the body. We must fear the one who destroys body and soul forever (Matthew. 10:28; Revelation 14:11 and 19: 19-21).

When the beast imposes by law its false system to the world, the prophecy says that the whole earth will be illuminated with the glory of God. Let's see this account:

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth were enriched by the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.” Revelation 18:1-4.

Likewise, this “*other angel*” must be understood as another group of messengers who will announce to the world the final fall of the great Babylon, that is, the great false system of worship.

The name Babylon is derived from Babel, which in turn leads us to the confusion of languages when building the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:9). It was in that region that later on, the great Babylon appeared.

Thus, the great Babylon that is announced as having fallen in the eighteenth chapter of Revelation refers to a time when all the religions that make up great Babylon will be involved in a great religious confusion, disregarding the supreme Law of God and imposing a false worship.

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That is why in prophecy it appears to become the home of demons, harboring all kinds of filth within it (Revelation 18:2). The apostle Paul, writing about the teachings of demons that would be accepted by many in the end times, states that these teachings would be promoted by men who forbid marriage (1 Timothy 4:1-3). Who are these but the Catholic priests?

That is why an important decision falls on those to whom this call is made urgently:

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.” Revelation 18:4.

What are these plagues? They are described in chapter sixteen of Revelation.

“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.” Revelation 16:1-2.

As we saw at the pouring out of the first plague, they will reach those who have the mark of the beast and worship his image, that is, they submitted to the false system of worship with the triune god and the false guard day, Sunday, which will be implanted by a world power that will act like papal Rome in the Middle Ages, using state power to punish dissidents.

That is why the call: *“Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.”* Revelation 18:4.

This call was made in several accounts in the Bible. Abram was called out of his homeland and kinship (Genesis 12:1). Lot was called out of Sodom with his family (Genesis 19:12-17). Moses and Aaron were called out of Egypt with all the Hebrew people (Exodus 12:31-33). Isaiah ordered the going out from the midst of unclean things (Isaiah 52:11), Jeremiah also gave a

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similar order (Jeremiah 50:8; 51:45) and Paul reinforced the warning (2 Corinthians 6:17).

The threefold message of Revelation 14 and the call of Apocalypse 18 are the last warnings to leave the midst of abomination and deception. Whoever does not answer the cry to leave the religions that practice and promote false worship will be hit with plagues (Rev 16), will be tormented with fire and sulfur (Rev 14:9-11) and will finally suffer the damage of the second death, eternal death (Rev 20: 5-6 and 14-15).

These warnings are for you reader, wherever you are on earth. Perhaps as you read these pages, this false system of worship is already in force by decree. Laws will be instituted imposing deception on all the inhabitants of the earth as prophesied in Revelation 13:15-17. However, in Psalm 94:20 we read the following:

“Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with you, which frames mischief by a law?”

It does not help the political and religious leaders to argue that a law imposing the day of guard and the system of worship created by them is for the good of the people, that this is not the truth. God is not associated with this, but the throne of iniquity.

What are you going to decide? To be a subject of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev 3:21; 22:1-3)? Or of the throne of iniquity (Psalm 94:20 and Revelation 13:2; 16:10)?

“Throne of iniquity”, “mystery of iniquity” and “throne of the beast”, are all related terms to portray the united power of religion and state to impose the transgression of the Law of God, which is iniquity and sin (1 John 3:4). That is why the *“man of sin”* is the one who rules on that throne (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) given to him by the dragon (Revelation 13:2).

In the Bible we are informed about who will not be part of the kingdom of God and Christ. See below:

“For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Eph 5:5.

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“Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:19-21.

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” Rev 21:8.

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.” Revelation 22:14-15.

The throne of iniquity, the throne of the beast, does not endeavor to condemn all these sins, on the contrary, he wants everyone to practice them, because the one who gave the throne to the beast was Satan himself (Revelation 13:2).

It is claimed that papal authority was given by Christ first to Peter and then to the other popes by apostolic succession. However, the authority and power of the papacy were given by the dragon, and not by Christ, as they claim, because Christ never sanctioned sin. The beast's throne was, as we saw in the text above, given by Satan himself.

Therefore, God's message is that those who wish to be his subjects will repent of their sins (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17; Acts 2:38

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and Revelation 2:5). However, while giving time for sinners to repent, many will not repent (Revelation 2:21).

Although it was the intention of the beast's throne to cast the truth to the ground (Daniel 8:12) and to change the Law of God (Daniel 7:25), "*The Lord is well pleased, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify the law and make it honourable.*" Isaiah 42:21.

When the transgression of the Law of Jehovah becomes widespread, when the laws of the nations are directly opposed to the Law of God, then the cry of the psalmist "*It is time for you, Lord, to work, for they have made void your law.*" (Psalm 119:126) will be answered by God.

What will your position be then? Which side will you be in this scenario? On the side of the obedient or of the transgressors? On the side of the almighty God who sits on the throne and the Lamb, or on the side of the beast and its image? Will you choose to receive the sign of God, the holy Sabbath, or the mark of the beast, the mandatory Sunday guard? These are serious questions that you must reflect on, dear reader, so that on that great day you will be among those who will say: "*And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*" Isaiah 25:9.

Many will be among those who will say:

"And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:16 and 17.

Whoever today does not recognize and worship God and the Lamb, when both are manifested in the clouds of heaven will want to hide from them. May the threats of the wicked and the voice of the majority not win us in this war.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and

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that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

“Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Tessalonians 1:7-12.

Join those who are truly called saints, for it is said of them: *“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Rev 14:12.*

May in this battle between true and false worship you be among the winners, are my sincere wishes, with the grace of God and His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Amen!

The end

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