

The Holy Mountain of God

by Richard Ganz

The Holy Mountain of God is the place of God's presence, where praise and worship are offered to Him, and it is also the church, the body of God's people, and the heavenly Jerusalem.

Duration: 52:53

Topics: "Holiness Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of worshiping God as a consuming fire. He urges the congregation to remember that God is holy and should be approached with fear and awe. The preacher highlights four principles for worshiping God, emphasizing the need to give ourselves fully to Him and to do what is acceptable to Him. The sermon also touches on the question of the future of Israel, referencing Romans 11 as a detailed passage on the topic.

Transcript

Turn with me in your Bible to the last chapter of Isaiah, chapter 66. I just want to read one verse for tonight, verse 20. And they will bring all your brothers from all the nations to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord on horses and chariots and wagons and on mules and camels, says the Lord.

They will bring them as the Israelites bring their grain offerings to the temple of the Lord in ceremonially clean vessels. God, thank you for this time to worship you on a Sabbath evening that we may remember the things you have done, that we may recall your dwelling in the holy mountain of God. God, bless us as we study this truth in your word and bring it to our hearts and minds with a fond remembrance and a zeal that works in our hearts for you.

In Jesus' name, Amen. This morning, we looked at the question that emerges in both the Revelation and in the book of Isaiah, what is the future of Israel? We studied the most detailed commentary concerning this question. And remember, the question of the future of Israel is important.

If for no other reason, people from all stripes, whether they be born-again Christians or whether they be Islamic fundamentalists, have this sense that there's some great event connected with Israel, whether it's in their destruction or whether it's in their exaltation, whether it's in their coming to Christ or whether it's being wiped off the face of the earth. Whether you be Jewish or not, to think about what's happening to Israel and what does God say is going to happen is a vitally important question. Romans 11 is that

detailed passage.

And tonight, what we're examining is this question once again because Isaiah brings his book to a conclusion by calling an international Israel, that's my term for it, by calling an international Israel in Isaiah 66.20 to a future at the holy mountain of God because God has declared in Isaiah 66 his plan of bringing judgment upon Israel, but they're repeated, they're steadfast, they're unaltering, idolatry, they're hypocrisy, they're rebellion. He has declared that there is, though, a way out, that he himself will bear the pain, the punishment, the suffering of bringing salvation to his people, to those, he says, who tremble at my word and that this salvation is a salvation that's going to go out to all the nations. Even as such judgment brings about the end of the old covenant, through God's son, not only will judgment be dealt with, but a new covenant will be instituted in its place.

And in this new covenant, the Gentiles are going to become members of this international Israel, this Israel of God. And this is an amazing plan of God's. Even here, you see, even in this, judgment is not the final word because, once again, we see mercy triumphing over judgment.

But this is not where it ends. And even greater mercy is in store for Israel, which is going to come about when the cast-off people of Israel shall find that their, quote, inclusion back into the church, the Israel of God is like life from the dead, Romans 11.15. God is going to execute fierce judgment on all those who are his enemies and all those who worship after idols. God will put an end to it and judge them.

That's what Isaiah 66, verses 14 through 17 is about. But the glory of nations, verse 12, will flood into God's people because the nations will flood in. This is the glory of the church.

It will be the glory of the people, the people coming to Christ, coming as those who are alive from the dead and obtaining peace with God through Christ. And then God will give a sign. That's in verses 18 and 19, a sign in which the nations are going to be gathered together who will yet proclaim God's glory to even further distant lands from which those from which they came.

In all of this, God gathering and forming an international Israel and Israel consisting of people from all the nations, coming, as verse 20 says, as a grain offering to the Lord. What does that mean? More specifically, I think it simply means coming to worship God. What is a grain offering? It's a non-bloody offering, a non-bloody sacrifice.

Most likely, it means that they are to be understood as offering themselves, coming to God's holy mountain to even more deeply understand the future of the Israel of God. That is the future of God's chosen people upon whom to many the future and end of history rests. So tonight, we're giving our attention to the holy mountain of God.

Listen again to Isaiah 66 20. They will bring the remnant of your people back from every nation. They will bring them to my holy mountain in Jerusalem and they will bring them as an offering to the Lord.

Isaiah chapter 10 verse 22 is used by Paul in Romans chapter 9 verse 27 to demonstrate the future of the nation of Israel, where he says, though the number of the Israelites be like the sand of the sea. And this fulfills the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 22 17 that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sands on the seashore. But as Isaiah 10 22 puts it, though their number be like the sand of the sea, what only the remnant will be saved.

These words immediately bring our attention to the closing words of Isaiah's book in chapter 66, where Isaiah once again and for a final time speaks of this remnant. But in the case in Isaiah 66 20, this remnant, along with people from the nations, is being brought back to what? To God's holy mountain, to the very presence that is, the very presence of God. In Isaiah 46 verses 3 and 4, another angle to this is added because this gathered remnant of Israel is a protected remnant.

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all of the remnant of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived and have carried since your birth, even to your old age and gray hairs. I am he. I am he who will sustain you.

I have made you. I will carry you. I will sustain you.

I will rescue you. You see, in the midst of being cast off, disobedient castoffs, idolatrous Israel, that's what they are. God, in the midst of this idolatrous nation, he has a remnant whom he has upheld, whom he has carried, who he has kept safe through all of his judgments.

He's protected them, a remnant that will never be lost because God is not casting them off. There is a remnant that is saved for him. And not only is the remnant saved, but the saved remnant in the old covenant, think about this, think about the place that that remnant in the old covenant has as they enter into the new covenant.

They become the core family of this new work called the new covenant. They're the core family of the new covenant church. God takes the remnant of Israel in gathering the Gentiles, saving a final and great portion of ethnic Israel as we started to see this morning and we're going to see more fully next week and forming from all nations and all the peoples a new Israel, what he calls in Galatians 6.16, the Israel of God.

These people, Isaiah 66.20 says, will be brought into God as an acceptable sacrifice. And this is why Paul urges us in Romans 12.1 to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God, which is, he says, your logicos, your logic, your reasonable. I know it's called in most of the translations as spiritual, but that's pneumatics.

He doesn't say that. He's saying this is what is reasonable for you. This is not spiritual.

This is just reasonable for you to do. It's your reasonable service of worship. Not only that, but Isaiah 66.20 continues, this Israel of God will dwell with God, will dwell with God at his holy mountain.

How does God execute such a worldwide plan? And that's what it is. You know, everyone talks today about missions and mission statements. The Bible is God's mission statement.

It's the worldwide evangelism. How does he do it? Isaiah 65.9 and following describe the procedure. God is going to bring forth his holy people, his, quote, chosen ones.

He is going to bring them forth to be a heavenly nation. What is this heavenly nation? Who is this holy people? Isaiah 65.11 answers this question. It's those who do not forsake the Lord and who do not forget his what? His holy mountain.

There it is again, twice in Isaiah in the last two chapters. The heavenly nation then are those who remain steadfast in their devotion to the Lord, that do not forsake the Lord, do not forget the Lord. That is, they do not forget or disregard the commandments of God.

They keep them close to their heart. Or as Deuteronomy 8.19 puts it, they do not follow other gods. Seems simple to do, simple requirements.

Obviously, it's not. And thus, as Isaiah 51.3 says, when they do this, they do not live in constant fear of harm or danger. You see, to not forsake God is a similar idea.

They're very similar to not forgetting God. It means that God's people do not depart from, do not abandon God, do not break his covenant, or worst of all, they don't worship other gods. That's what it means to not forget him.

Positively, it is to worship him truthfully and truly. You can see this in Jeremiah 1.16 where God judges Israel because he says, of all of their wickedness whereby they have forsaken me and have offered sacrifices to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands. You can see this same idea in Deuteronomy 28.20 and Deuteronomy 31.16. Forsaking the Lord and forgetting his holy mountain are essentially the same thing.

They are both expressions of turning away from God and the result is apostasy, which in turn invariably and inevitably leads to the worship of false gods. When you turn away from God, you will be worshipping false gods eventually. And we must never forget God's holy mountain.

That is, we must yearn for what? For Zion, for the city of God, for the dwelling place of the Holy One. And you can see, you can see the centrality of God's holy mountain. This is no casual reference here in Isaiah 66.

In fact, it's referenced possibly upward when you take all the different translating aspects of it in mind, keep it in mind, possibly up to 21 times in the Old Testament. Six of those times are in Isaiah. For example, in Psalm 2 verse 6, God declares, I have installed my king in Zion, my holy mountain.

Joel 3.17, you will know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain. I mean, everyone's getting this. They're putting this together, each one.

So Jerusalem will be holy and strangers will pass through it no more. Thus, again, God's holy mountain is Zion. Psalm 43.3 tells us that this is the dwelling place of God.

Listen, send forth your light, send forth your truth, let them guide me, let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. And so interesting, here in Psalm 43, David's being hounded by enemies and he's begging the Lord to plead his case for him. David knows that he doesn't have enough strength of his own.

After all, he says, this is an evil nation, God. They're persecuting me, they're hounding me. And in the face of this, he declares, wait a minute, I don't have to have that strength, you are my strength.

And he is comforted in knowing that in spite of his weakness, he is strong because the Lord is his strength. And furthermore, since the Lord has always been his strength, he starts to reason. Why would you cast me off? He's concerned about that and he says, why would you cast me off? And the answer is that, of course, God's not going to cast him off.

The answer is that God will never ever cast off anyone who trusts in him. And so then, what does David want in the time of his great distress? See, that's a great question. He wants to see and he wants to

behold the truth of God.

He wants to be brought to the place of God's holy mountain. You know, we, like David, need the word of God to be open to us so that we know God better and can view and respond to whatever our situation is in a biblical manner. That's what we want, don't we? Isn't that what we want? As Paul prays in Ephesians 1, 17 through 19, I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints and his incomparably great power for all of us who believe. See, Paul keeps asking God that we, the body of believers, would see and would know all of the truth of God, all that will help us have just what David prayed that he would have, a spirit-inspired insight into how to face what seems to be God's rejection of us. See, even when you know God won't reject me, what you need to know is how do you face that when it comes upon you and you experience that? And thus, how to be able to be led by what? To be led by the spirit and not to be led by circumstances or evils.

How to be led by the spirit to what? To God's holy mountain, the place where God dwells. In other words, in all of his struggles, David wants to be led directly into what he sees as the only safe place, the very presence of God. And this is what God promises in Isaiah 65, 25.

They'll do no evil or harm in all of my holy mountain, says the Lord. He's protected there. He knows that's the place of protection.

Psalms 48, 1 and 2 tells us that praise is rendered to God on his holy mountain. Praise, this is worship. And that his mountain is a place of beauty.

We read, great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, on his holy mountain. It is beautiful in its loftiness. The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, the city of the great king, Mount Zion, the city of the great king, the holy mountain.

So because of the greatness of the Lord, he is worthy of all praise that's rendered to him in the city of God, the holy mountain of God, Jerusalem, Mount Zion. You see, Jerusalem is simply an earthly picture of a glorious, heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly Zion. And thus, the praise of God that he is worthy of is the praise of the full number of God's people from every age gathered together in the heavenly city of which Hebrews 12, 22 through 23 says, reflecting on this verse in Psalm 48, by the way.

Isn't it amazing how they reflect back and forth on places in the scripture and come out with something that becomes completely relevant for a situation that exists in the new covenant or even at the end of the age? And here in Hebrews 12, he says, reflecting on Psalm 48, you have come to Mount Zion, to what? The heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. The holy mountain of God then is what? It's the church, the whole people of God whose names are written in heaven and those among whom God dwells.

It's the dwelling place of God. And so when God says that the praise is rendered to him in the holy mountain of God, he is saying that the praise is rendered to him in the midst of the church. We are a body that is called together to offer praise and worship to God.

Psalm 87 verses 1 and 2 tells us more about God's holy mountain. He has set his foundation on the holy mountain. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all of the dwellings of Jacob.

The holy mountain of God is the church and God has set a foundation for his church, which is none other than Jesus Christ. The foundation of the church is Christ and thus, the foundation of the church is solid, it is sure. And with such a foundation, Zion, the city of God, the church of the firstborn can never sink, can never be destroyed, can never be washed out by a tsunami.

Verse 3 of Psalm 87 says that the glorious things are said of the city of God as the nations are brought in and glorious things are said about this city. Nothing can move the church because its foundation is Christ. Its foundation is holy and thus, it too then is holy if the foundation, the root is holy, the whole body is holy.

Psalm 99 verse 9 says, exalt the Lord our God and worship at his holy mountain for the Lord our God is holy. We can sing Psalm 99 later, I like that. This is a psalm about worship and about holiness.

We read that the Lord is great, that the Lord is holy, that the Lord is high over all, that the Lord is just, that the Lord is impartial, that the Lord is righteous, that because of who the Lord is, we should worship him. And we should do so at his holy mountain, which is another way of saying that we are worshipping him together as the church in his presence. We are in his presence when we're worshipping.

And when we come to God and worship, beholding such unrivaled beauty, exaltation, and holiness, we see before us, expecting to see a throne of power, we see a throne of grace and a judge who can judge us with a ferocity that would sweep us away forever. And yet he bestows upon his people unparalleled mercy and grace. And we learn more and more as we learn more of him.

This is what we can expect. It's not something superstitious. It's what we can expect coming into the presence of our Lord and our God because the God of such exalted holiness is also the God of infinite grace, mercy, and love.

Adding to what we've seen so far, Isaiah uses the expression by holy mountain six times throughout his incredible book. And from those six places, he uses this expression. It's clear that he is speaking of the place of God's presence.

And so then, this holy mountain of God is what? It's Jerusalem. But this holy mountain of God is what? It's also Zion. This holy mountain of God is the heavenly name given to the Jerusalem above.

The holy mountain of God is the place where praise is brought forth to God. The holy mountain of God is also the church, the body of God's people. And thus, this holy mountain of God is more over than wherever people meet God in true faith and in worship.

It is not one single physical locality. This holy mountain is, according to Isaiah 11.9, as extensive as the entire earth. Listen to this.

There shall not be evil or destruction in all of my holy mountain. Why? Because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. How did the waters cover the sea? Have you ever been perplexed by it? Well, I can only say one way that the waters cover the sea.

Totally, deeply, fully. As we saw in Psalm 2, God has established Jesus on his holy mountain. This mountain, the church, in praise and worship of God is founded on Christ.

It is ruled by Christ. It is protected by Christ. The Messiah's reign is over all of the earth.

And over all of the earth, the worship of God is called for. But such worship, worldwide, commanded by God, never ever seemed to really impact the nation of Israel. That's the startling result of Isaiah's inspiration.

Except when they were caught up in one thing, which was the glory of physical temple building, which was never more. The temple, as glorious as it was, was no different than when Moses left the tabernacle and they saw his face veiled. And everyone says, you know, you talk to people and say, why was his face veiled? They say, because of the glory.

People couldn't behold the glory. But it doesn't say that in the New Covenant. It says he veiled his face because he did not want people to see the glory that was fading.

It was a fading glory, because that wasn't the end result. The tabernacle wasn't, nor was the temple. It wasn't a disaster when it was destroyed.

It was part of the plan of redemption Jesus called the shots. It was a fading glory itself, never more than fading glory at best. Israel never understood what Jesus said or meant in John 4, 21 through 24, that, and here he's speaking to a Samaritan woman, whom he's had a conversation with, and he says, the time is coming when the father will neither be worshipped on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, because the time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the father in spirit and in truth.

But they are the kind of worshippers that the father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. Finished.

That's his commentary on worship to this woman. God's worship, which was done in the old covenant temple, was to break forth out of that and be offered now in and through Christ by all of the nations through all of the world since the church is now God's temple. Do you realize this living temple is infinitely more glorious than the temple ever was in Jerusalem? And the most significant principle for Israel, the principle of God calling worshippers in spirit and in truth from all the world, from all the nations, all the tongues and peoples, became Israel's most significant failure.

Because here in John's gospel in that passage, in John 4 that I just read, it is a hated Samaritan woman. That's how Israel viewed her. Not just a Samaritan which they hated, but a woman to boot who was less than appreciated.

Let's put it gently in Israel. This is the person who would get it before Israel could even imagine it. And Israel could not imagine it because they never understood the life-giving power of God.

They were looking at things physically on the basis of what could be built and done by them, on the basis of works rather than grace. Do you remember when Jesus told the people in John 17, 3, now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent. Israel's worship of God was dead.

It was dead because they were dead. They didn't understand that eternal life was not going through some motions even in a well-crafted worship service. It was a relationship with Christ.

Not the slavish keeping of 613 laws every day, laws which you can find ways around anyway when you had a good enough rabbi who could show you how to break that law and call it keeping the law, which God made, by the way, so that they would see not their ability to keep the law, but their need of someone to keep it for them because it was impossible in one's own strength to keep such law, it brought failure. And it boils down to this. They have no life because they do not know the one true God and his son, Jesus Christ.

And if there's no true knowledge of God and him whom he has sent, then there can be no worship in spirit and in truth. It can't be, it cannot exist, which is the only worship that is acceptable to God. You see, what we're talking about comes down to this.

It is really all about worship. We all hear it all the time. I like to worship on my own.

I don't need to have to be involved in a church. I can, I mean, I appreciate the difficulties. I appreciate the problems that have come to all of us through the organized church.

But our worship is in the church with the people of God and its support, and this is of central importance. This is number one priority to God, his worship, because God, being God, is about glorifying his name in the lives of his people and in his church. You see, speaking of a holy mountain, when Jesus spoke to that Samaritan woman, he was going beyond this mountain.

That is, he was going beyond a single physical mountain, and he was taking us back to his holy mountain, where God's divine presence was revealed, and it was a presence revealed to one man, and it was a presence which demanded unadulterated worship and devotion. Listen to Exodus 3.12. You see, we all remember the situation, Moses meeting with God, but do we remember what God said? Here's how he opens his dialogue with Moses. You will worship God on this mountain, and speaking of what else? The holy mountain of God.

In Exodus 15.17, you will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance, the holy mountain of God, the place, O Lord, you made for your dwelling, your sanctuary, the place, O Lord, which your hands established. Or to Exodus 19, as Israel is preparing then to receive the law of God and God's holy mountain, the mountain of his presence is mentioned 18 times from Exodus to the giving of the law. This is an expansion of it because it's mentioned in a variety of different ways.

In Exodus 19.23, we read that Israel was to put limits around the holy mountain and set it apart as holy. See, it's a holy mountain. And then immediately after, immediately after the law is given in Exodus 20.18, we read that the people saw the thunder and the lightning and they heard the trumpets, saw the mountain in smoke and they trembled with fear.

On that day, on that day alone, God's presence would rest upon that mountain alone. And thus, for that time, that mountain was to be set apart as holy. For on that day the Lord had descended to the top of Sinai, the mountain of Sinai.

Why? Why then? Why there? Well, if you read Exodus 20, you'll understand and you'll know the answer to that question because it was from that place that God gave his commandments and those commandments were to be life for his people. Exodus 20.18-20 which follows the giving of the law the immediate words at the end of the 10th commandment, it says this. It doesn't say they heard the law and marveled wow, this is now our law.

We have a commentary on how to live. This is our life. No, they say when the people saw the thunder and the lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear, they stayed at a distance, they said to Moses speak to us yourself and we will listen, but please don't have God speak to us or we're going to die.

Moses said to the people here was his response fear not, God has come to test you so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning. You can call this the mountain of fear, you can call it the mountain of testing, you can call it the mountain of holiness. Why? It was done it is so that the fear of the Lord would keep his people from sinning.

If you fear sinning you will not have to fear God in a horrible way you can fear him in the right way but if you have no fear of sin then your life is going to follow the course of the nation of Israel and then you like them will forsake God's presence, forgetting the holy mountain of God. See, remembering the mountain of God always brings us back to Exodus 20 and then it brings us back to the law and it brings us back to the test and it brings us back to remember fear not but fear him who cast body and soul to hell but of this great first time fear inducing appearance of the holy mountain the writer of Hebrews 1500 years later would comment on this awesome scene from Sinai in Hebrews 12, 18-25 he says you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire to darkness, gloom and storm, you have not come to that to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word would be spoken to them because they could not bear what was commanded if even an animal touches the mountain it must be stoned the sight was so terrifying that Moses said I'm trembling with fear. Moses says that instead you have come to Tzion mountain of Zion to the heavenly Yerushalayim to the city of the living God.

You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly to the church of the first born whose names are written in heaven by the way here's another corroboration that God's holy mountain Mount Zion is the church you have come to God the judge of all men to the spirits of righteous men to Jesus the mediator of the covenant and to the sprinkled blood that speaks better than the blood of Abel you heard about the church of the first born see to it that you do not refuse him who speaks to you. See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth how much less will we escape if we return away from him who warns us from heaven.

This holy mountain of God this Mount Zion this heavenly Jerusalem is the final display of what was revealed to a wandering nation in the wilderness this is where the holy mountain of God was pointing this is where it says we have come. We have come to the heavens. We are learning even still from the voice on the mountain who speaks to us urging us, urging all who hear the voice to not refuse him who speaks warning us from heaven notice the conclusion of the whole matter since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, what? Let us be thankful and based on what I was saying before, listen to this let us worship God in an acceptable way with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire Hebrews 12 28 and 29 biblical living godly living is all about worship Hebrews 12 before arriving at the passages we just saw the chapter opens with a major discourse on of all things, you might think it's totally unrelated discipline the need for discipline it says for example in verse 11 of Hebrews 12, discipline produces a harvest of righteousness for those who have been trained by discipline such God-designed discipline enables us, you see to exercise righteousness and holiness.

It produces a harvest of righteousness and holiness without such righteousness and holiness the author says in verse 14 we will not see God this righteousness that we exercise does not save us but rather it is

what we live out as those who are the righteous in Christ. It's a righteousness which makes, it says in verse 14, every effort at holiness why? Because in Christ we have come to the holy mountain not to a mountain but to the holy mountain so that wherever we are in Christ we are there at God's holy mountain because it's the place of gathering for his holy people it's his gathered people it's his presence felt it's his holiness demanded it's his love given so that as the passage in Hebrews ends, we are equipped equipped for what? We read in verse 28 that we are equipped for worshiping God in a manner that is acceptable to God, a manner that is with reverence and awe you see friends God in this passage in Hebrews 12 brings us back to the scene at Sinai at the holy mountain where the threat of death loomed if even an animal touched the mountain but now in these last days what God has done is called together a people greater than the old covenant people could ever have been because these are not simply an ethnic people, which was never meant to be anyway, these are the international Israel of God called together to worship God in spirit and truth do you ever think that the Israelites even had a clue that they might have misjudged the far reaching impact of such an international worshiping community because God is saying in these days is using that international worshiping community to bring them to envy and jealousy. Do you think that they even began to wonder what such an outpouring of God's grace could possibly mean? Now to make this more, let me use the word contextualized so to speak, do you think that the church today might even be willing to consider the possibility that they are not worshiping acceptably? Did you follow my question? Is the church willing to look at this question? I don't think the church even has in all its desire to be contextualized has even thought about that question.

Let me give you an idea about what I mean. When people worship with us often one of the first questions I hear after people wonder why are we doing what we do? They're not thinking it often in a pleasant feeling. It's like this is strange.

How strange is it to sing songs that are in the Bible? Is that strange? That first question after they wonder what we do, why we do what we do is this. Often this is the question. Something happens to them because this is the question I get.

Are you suggesting by doing this that other worship such as the contemporary worship from the church where I go is not acceptable to God? They may not use the word acceptable. God doesn't want us to do it? I'm asked a question in that way. I'm supposed to answer it.

I mean wow. I'm supposed to answer that question. From the Word of God they should be able actually okay this is a jeopardy question.

Go back to the Bible and check it out and see what your answer is. They should get that from the Bible. It should be there.

If it's not there then it's not worth having as a question. After all it's God's Word and if he's talking about worship in this most central place, Isaiah is coming to the end. His life's work is coming to an end.

He has nothing more to say and in his last verse he's saying look it's about worship. It's about worship that's acceptable to God. People often then become angry that we worship this way.

That makes them angry. They get really unpleasant about this situation because it marks a noticeable difference between what we do and what they do. Believe me there is nothing that we do here that's done because others do things differently such as okay let's do this now this way because we're really marking ourselves out.

Who wants to be different? It would be a lot easier and far more humanly successful if you want to think that way to simply do what people want and what they're used to. But the real question of course has nothing to do with what I think about these issues or what would be successful or what people might like but only whether God finds what we do as acceptable. That's what the holy mountain question is all about.

Are you doing what's acceptable when you're coming into the presence of God and no one should care about what I think or whether it's so different that it makes you feel uncomfortable. They only raise the question when they suddenly realize often for the first time oh God has standards for worship? I mean I think such and such is worshipful. What more standard can we have? And then they're surprised by that.

They're surprised that there might be standards. You see the world and often the church as well often does things assuming well we're not doing something that's obviously bad so we can do what we want as long as stealing, lying, killing, and sex outside of marriage aren't happening but you see friends God does have standards and he expects us to listen to him and follow his standards. What are his standards? His standards are only what he commands as acceptable is acceptable.

That's the way it is. I don't want to even go into what those might be in this particular case. I'm just saying that's what he's talking about here and in John 4.24 his standard for worship is worship that is according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit as defined in his word of truth spirit and truth you must do it in spirit and truth it's not spirit in the sense of my spirit feels good with this.

It's the Holy Spirit who brings us into the truth and whether we think we have it right or not you know what that is? That's called utterly irrelevant because the ultimate reality is that God is a consuming fire. The God who smashes hell and the gates of hell is not a campfire song leader. He is a consuming fire and as we train our eyes we train our eyes as Hebrews 12 says to focus on Jesus.

Hebrews 12.2 we can see this and we can see it with clarity. The so called gentle Jesus as we focus on him we find him taking on principalities and powers. Ephesians 6.12. Taking every thought captive to make it obedient to him.

2 Corinthians 10.5 and he says here I am a consuming fire and until we learn this and until we stop trying to avoid this we are walking on very dangerous ground because we're walking casually and carelessly on holy ground and we, I'm not talking about anyone else, we should not do that in our worship, in our life in our families, with our friends with anything, anyone at any time. We are not to forget our God is a consuming fire. In the face of that I want you to remember these just very very quickly four principles I've cut them out to almost nothing because of time constraints.

First of all the mountain of God that is a body of beloved saints. The mountain of, the holy mountain of God, that mountain, a body of beloved saints, the mountain of God. Secondly is a message cried out, fear God.

It's cried out. How many times do we have to hear from people we love and friends that's a ridiculous thing to say fear God, we don't fear God anymore. Well do you know who God is? He's a consuming fire.

The third, the mountain of God is a city, and that city is the church, the church of the first born and so it is the place of worship, it is the place of acceptable worship. And so you see the language of the holy mountain of God and the holy temple, both of which we are in Christ. We are to give ourselves, you see we are to give ourselves holding nothing of ourselves back.

We are to do so in fear and awe because God is a consuming fire and we are to know as Paul tells us later that this is our logical, our reasonable service of worship. So you know how it ends for us on this note? It ends this way. This life, this is the life.

I will do what is acceptable to you God. You don't have to do what's extraordinary to God, do what's acceptable. That's what he calls us to.

And if this life is for you, I call you then to Jesus Christ. If it's been to Jesus Christ but it's been my way with Jesus, then make it his way. Make it the acceptable way to God.

And if that's what you want, then trust in him. Trust in him to get you through acceptable things that you might find unacceptable right now. To be thankful for a love so great that he died for you.

For a passion so intense with a hatred of sin that is so fierce that he bore it for you so that we through him might live. And that you realize, you see, you realize there is nothing, nothing that merits anything apart from his love-bathed sacrifice for sin. And so I call you tonight to the final holy mountain of God.

Not an altar or a step at the front of the church, but to the holy mountain of God, the final one. I call you to the international Israel of God as we worship not at his holy mountain, but as his holy mountain. And we do this wherever we are because in Jesus God is with us anywhere and everywhere because God cannot depart from his holy mountain.

He made it. He redeemed it. He protected it.

He keeps it secure. And he will keep it secure until the final, final moment of the final day, when we will see, as Romans 21.10 says, a mountain. End of the Revelation, one chapter away, we will see a mountain, great and high, the holy city, Yerushalayim, coming down out of heaven from God, shining with the true glory of God.

May God bless you as you seek a life in him that is acceptable to God. You know what that is, friends? It's your reasonable, not your extraordinary, your reasonable service of worship. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, holy, holy, holy, the Lord God almighty, the whole earth is filled with your glory, a hidden glory, for the whole earth does not behold such glory. It focuses instead on what is vile and debased, but our eyes are lifted to Christ. So when my friend says to me, how was your God today? My God is lifted up, greatly exalted, just as many were astonished to my people, so he shall salvage the lives, souls of many.

He gave himself an offering for sin. May that offering for sin have touched the heart and life of every single one here. May we as your people worship you.

God, let us not presume with you about this. I dare not do this for myself and for your flock. May we worship you.

May we be guided daily to understand what is acceptable in your sight. We commit ourselves to make this our reasonable service of worship to you. In the name and in the love of Jesus.

Amen.

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