

The Scriptural Regulation of Worship

For notes and audio, visit the-lamp-lighter.com

Deuteronomy 12

If a person decides to walk across the United States in a straight line, yet is 1 degree off, the error in their direction grows over the distance traveled. The farther the person walks without course correction, the greater the miss will be from the target.

The miss starts small. After 1 mile, he is only 92 feet off course... But then, the mistake steadily, but surely, grows.

- ✓ After 1 mile → 92 feet off
- ✓ After 100 miles → 1.7 miles off
- ✓ After 1,000 miles → 17.5 miles off
- ✓ After 3,000 miles → 52 miles off

That's why Scripture continually calls believers to recalibrate:

"Set your mind on things above" (Col. 3:2),
"Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21),
"Do not neglect meeting together" (Heb. 10:25).

What seems like a gentle drift in the beginning becomes big miss in the end.

I. God Alone Regulates the Worship of Himself (Deut 12:1-3, 4, esp. vs. 4)

A. God regulates what true worship is (Deut 12:1).

1. **Genesis 4:4-5**, *And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.*
2. **Leviticus 10:1-2**, *Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.*

B. God prohibits idolatrous practices and orders their destruction (Deut 12:2-3)

1. **Exodus 20:4-5**, *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,*
2. Asherah, the Canaanite fertility goddess, is believed to be the mother of the gods.
 - a) The Israelites were agrarian people who depended upon agriculture for survival. They faced the temptation to worship the fertility gods and goddesses to garner favor and success.
 - b) Over time, as Israel witnessed the success of their neighbors' crops, animals, and societies, they credited success to the fertility gods.
 - c) As a result, these fertility deities infiltrated Israelite worship. These practices involved a variety of fleshly behaviors that were incorporated into "worship."
3. Israel was commanded to destroy, tear down, dash in pieces, and burn their 'Asherim' with fire. The Asherim were wooden idols representing the fertility gods displayed at worship sites. **Deuteronomy 16:21** *"You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the Lord your God that you shall make.*

C. God forbids His worship to be in the Canaanite manner (Deut 12:4)

II. God Alone Directs the Worship of Himself (Deut 12:4, 5-11)

A. True Worship Must Have a Biblical Warrant.

1. Whatever is not commanded in Scripture is forbidden, as opposed to what is not expressly forbidden is normalized. Examples:
 - a) The Lord's Supper - *This do in remembrance of me. (1 Cor 11:20-29)*
 - b) Church Worship - *Forsake not the assembling of yourselves. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*
2. The Word of God is sufficient in matters of faith and practice
 - a) **Proverbs 30:6**, *Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.*
 - b) **Ecclesiastes 3:14**, *I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.*
 - c) **Revelation 22:18-19**, *I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

B. The Only Icon of Worship is Christ – He is the only “image” that captures who God is...

1. **Colossians 1:15**, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*
2. **2 Corinthians 4:4**, *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*
3. **Hebrews 1:3**, *He {Christ} is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*
4. **Philippians 2:6**, *Who {Christ}, though he was in the form of God,*
5. **John 1:14**, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

III. The Light For Our Path:

- A. Worship focuses our desires on spiritual, heavenly things (Col 3:1)
- B. Worship sets our thinking upon heavenly things (3:2)
- C. Worship properly sets our living out the new and resurrected life (Col 3:3-4).
- D. Worship moves us to “put off” earthly/fleshly things (Col 3:5-9)
- E. Worship calls us to “put on” heavenly/spiritual things (Col 3:10-17)
 1. Put on the new self (Col 3:10)
 2. Put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, forgiveness (Col 3:12-13)
 3. Put on love & peace (Col 3:14-15)
 4. Align to Word of God (Col 3:16)
 5. Do everything in the name of Christ (Col 3:17)