

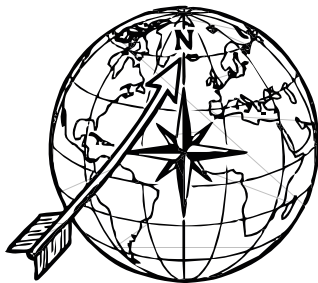
WORSHIPPERS OF THE LAST DAY



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Chapter
01

**A TRIP UP
NORTH**



01



A TRIP UP NORTH

I used to look forward to fellowshiping with our Christian brothers and sisters from the Northern part of Nigeria. There was something about their faith and love for God that resonated with the essence of my worship. I come from the South and we do worship intensely, but there was something genuine about the worship up North. It was pure, sincere, deep and undefiled. It still is.

Some claim that this is due to the heightened persecution of Christians in those regions, while some others believe that it is simply a result of the poverty index. Whatever you choose to believe will not change

the fact that the kind of worship you are likely to encounter up north will stir you up to more in God. As an itinerant minister and worship leader, I have had the privilege of visiting several hundreds of churches in both remote areas and urban cities, and I can attest to the purity of the worship in the northern regions.

On one of my visits to Kaduna, a state in Northwest Nigeria, I witnessed a tribute for a young worship leader who had been gruesomely murdered a few days before our visit. The testimony went on about how amazing a worshipper he was. Sadly, he innocently walked into an Islamic mob on his way back from church on that fateful day and was killed for sport. The mob was supposedly celebrating a victory. Talk of the persecution of Christians in the North! I had questions!

“LORD, why would you allow such a vibrant fellow and fantastic worshiper to die like that? He had literally just finished singing Your praises and leading others to do the same in the service!”

My little brain could not comprehend it. But, as is usual with God, He took me on a different journey with His answer, like He did with Job in the Bible.

Luke 21:16-17

You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; AND THEY WILL PUT **SOME OF YOU TO DEATH. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake.**

Does worshipping God truly immunise a person from things like death, persecution, poverty and the evils in this world? I reckon that thoughts and questions like this must be properly dealt with, in order to address erroneous beliefs that may have been passed down through uninformed passions to a finishing generation in the Church. Sometimes, whether in the euphoria of the moment or in a bid to stir the people of God to worship, we accept high-sounding and sensational statements that may come across as some new revelation, but, in most cases, are crafted out of our feeble emotions and have no root in the Scriptures.

A true worshipper is content with the Father's will, whatever the demand, the process or the result.

Yes, on one hand, being a true worshipper of God automatically exempts you from calamity, but this is only true to the degree of God's purpose and your

obedience. “Remember Lot's wife!” (Genesis 19:17, 26; Luke 17:32)

On the flip side, being a true worshipper is your one-way ticket to the very things that you may have been praying against. Listen! For some of us, worship will mean enduring death by a mob or being burnt at a stake, like Jesus who endured the death of the cross for us because it was the Father's will. But God had a plan – a plan too difficult for even the wise old serpent to comprehend, let alone man. He always does. As the Scriptures say, “Had they known, they would not have crucified the LORD of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8). True worship is never about the will of the worshipper, but the will of the One who is being worshipped. A true worshipper is content with the Father's will, whatever the demand, the process or the result.

Worship teaches us to put God first and only, so our hearts must quickly become satisfied that He is glorified in and through everything. The posture of true worship is immutable. It is unaffected by the good or bad, by life or death, by likes or dislikes, by engagements or the lack of it, by approvals or disapprovals, by success or failure, or by results. We must apply this to everything we do in the Body of

Christ if we will overcome the raging flood of life's deceptions. What must guide our events, our sermons, our ministering, our systems, our posts, our decisions, our projects, our outreaches, our evangelism, our fellowship, our service, our giving and our spending is nothing but pure worship – resolute love and honour for our God, and obedience to Him. Not how it makes us feel, or how it makes us look, or if it puts us on the map, etc, but PURE WORSHIP! We must constantly check our motives – each weighing his own heart – for every act of worship. No one can do this for you.

A HIGHER CALL TO WORSHIP

Several years ago, I received a call one morning from James, a dear brother in Christ, who was deeply disturbed by the proliferation of what seemed to be a new wave at the time. The Church had suddenly awakened to a new sound and depth of worship. Slower songs began to take centre stage again at Christian gatherings, and worship leaders, who erstwhile were probably unnoticed, suddenly began to have a voice. Something had shifted! I knew this because I was an active player as a musician and singer

for several A-list urban gospel music artistes back in the day, and I was witnessing the shift firsthand.

Brother James was concerned that the increasing popularity of this once-sacred ritual that seemed like the exclusive reserve of just a few serious-minded believers was being corrupted. So, he asked, “Why do we even worship? What is this all about? To what end?”

Now, because I had been teaching on the subject of worship for a little while, it was easy for me to provide him with a textbook answer, but for some reason, I paused to inquire of the LORD what all this was really about. Then He spoke to me:

“I am responsible for it, all that you see happening around you. The unquenching hunger for God, that wanting to be closer to Him, the raging desire to know God more, the fresh wave of songs of consecration, love and surrender – I am behind it all. Because tough times are coming, David. Temptation is coming!” (Paraphrased)

Friend, there is a divine call for true worshippers to arise. There is a call for true worship in every

generation that the enemy keeps fighting to corrupt, so that it loses its potency.

As I pondered on what the LORD had said to me, I began to understand what was happening and why. The preparation for battle is not made on the day of the battle. An army that is entangled with civilian affairs on the day of battle is already defeated, and a student who only begins to prepare on the day of their exam has already failed. Strength and stamina are never built on the day of adversity (Proverbs 24:10). God was preparing His army.

Hear this: ONLY WORSHIP CAN PREPARE YOU TO WORSHIP!

Jesus conceding to give up His life on the cross, Abraham agreeing to sacrifice His only son and the three Hebrew boys surrendering themselves to death by fire is what worship sounds like in these last days. Any heart that does not already love and honour the Lord will find it difficult to say yes to His will when the Day comes. But it begins with the little things. The progression of worship is from the heart, then the mouth, and then, the life.

In the last days, the earth will be in dire need of

men who will stand to defend God's truth. The love of many will wax cold because ungodliness will grossly multiply, but our love for God must grow stronger (Matthew 24:12). True worship helps the believer fulfil the greatest commandment, which is to love the LORD with our all (I will speak more about this in Chapter 4). The words we sing in our moments of worship should be expressions of our love and allegiance to God. We must no longer accept lies, we will no longer exchange the worship of God for our own satisfaction, we will no longer hide our unfaithful hearts behind soothing vocals and instrumentals.

God has been preparing His endtime army all along through worship. True worship makes submission easy. It brings our hearts into oneness with God, and sets us in faultless alignment with His will. One who is not a true worshipper cannot survive the persecution and temptation that is coming, nor can they boldly do what the LORD expects us to do when the need arises. No amount of prayer and fasting, shouting, jumping, singing, and confessing can trump our obedience and alignment with God's will. Let me say this now: worship – through obedience – is the only chance we stand at defeating the enemy in these last

days. If we will overcome collectively, we must begin to worship God correctly as He desires to be worshipped.

**God has been preparing His endtime army
all along through worship.**

One of the things that we must guard against in the last days is FEAR. Jesus addressed the issue of fear, saying, “See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass...” (Matthew 24:6, Luke 21:9). Many have and many will sacrifice their faith on the altar of fear: the fear of death, fear of the unknown, fear of tomorrow, fear of being attacked, fear of being cancelled, fear of being trolled, fear of losing their livelihoods, fear of losing their reputation, fear of losing friends, loved ones and followers, fear of being arrested, etc. But the Bible assures us that every true believer – worshipper and disciple of Jesus – will be greatly helped by God, the Holy Spirit being our advantage (Luke 21:12-15, John 16:7). We will never be afraid to do what is right by God.

James 1:12.

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”

WHY WE WORSHIP

There are many reasons why we worship God, but this is perhaps my all-time favourite, because of how fundamental it is: WE WORSHIP GOD FOR NOTHING ELSE BUT HIM! Yes, we do not worship primarily for anything that has to do with ourselves, but because God deserves all our worship by every measurable standard, even if He chooses not to demand it. This is where true worship begins.

In his book, *The Reset*, Jeremy Riddle wrote, “Something can only be as powerful as it is pure.” Worship in its purest form does not require any other reason, neither does it accommodate any other agenda, aside God Himself. True worship often demands that we set aside our feelings, personal desires, opinions, requests, preferences, and even our reputation. This is a reflection of heaven's standard of worship, as we see with the elders and the angels around the throne of God in Revelation 4:8-11. They willingly and unanimously give all praise, honour, power, glory, wisdom, strength and thanksgiving to God because He is worthy of it, not because they are desiring something in return. (See Revelation 5:13 and 7:11.)

Worship is not a means to an end; it is an end in itself. Although every man has been given the power to choose, worshipping God is an expected response from all of God's creation. For us as believers, it is both a duty and a privilege. A duty because we were all created by Him and for His pleasure (Revelation 4:11 KJV); yet it is a privilege because we stood no chance of ever relating to God as a result of sin, but through Christ Jesus, God has made it possible that we should be partakers of His life (2 Corinthians 1:20, 2 Peter 1:3-4). This privilege has been extended to all men through Jesus Christ.

**Worship is not a means to an end;
it is an end in itself.**

Worshipping God with this mindset gets you off to a good start. And though there are innumerable benefits for worshipping God, our focus is never what we stand to gain, in terms of earthly things; God Himself is gain. The fact that we have access to worship Him at all, with all of our weaknesses and humanity still in view, is truly “great gain”. You haven't begun to understand worship until you are completely satisfied by the 'mere' fact that you are giving to God what He wants, or what He deserves.

True worship is not transactional, but it is rewarding. It is so rewarding that if we caught a glimpse of its rewards, we would not only worship Him, but we would worship truly without adulteration. Think of worship as intentionally and willingly putting God ahead of yourself every time: how He feels, what He wants, what will make Him happy, what He needs, His desire, His agenda, His presence, His work, His praise, His body (the Church), etc. Pure worship is responding to God in all these things without ever considering yourself. It is our response to a God who already considered us by giving up His Son for us; who also has, undoubtedly, freely given us all things (Romans 8:32).

In the Old Testament, worship involved the killing of oxen and bulls; and whenever this was done as commanded, it pleased God and He always responded as He promised (Exodus 29:38-42). In this new dispensation, we are His sacrifices (offered through Christ), and God responds to us as we worship Him with all our hearts. One may wonder: What then is the place of faith and having expectations in worship? Worship is in itself an act of faith in God – faith in His person, His love, His ability, etc. When an individual

chooses to believe the word of God and act on His instruction by faith, that's worship. A classic example is Isaac's faith that God would bless Him – as He had promised – if he remained in Gerar during the famine. Isaac worshipped God by honouring His command with godly expectation (Genesis 26:1-14).

Two classic examples of the rewards of pure worship according to God's standards are Abraham and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

- To Abraham, the Lord said, “...because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore...” (Genesis 22:16-17). Abraham's blessing came as a result of his obedience and honour for God, which is worship.
- Jesus modelled worship to us as a man in total surrender and obedience to the will of God, after which God exalted His name. The Bible says in Philippians 2:8-9, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the

cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name”

These examples show us that worshipping the Lord purely is undeniably and immeasurably rewarding. It is never the same when we mix His worship with our own agenda. Beyond what our minds can comprehend, God opens us up to the boundless blessing of Himself and His will for us when we worship Him in spirit and in truth. While singing in worship, we must always remember that in coming TO HIM, we must come first FOR HIM and for nothing else. With God, there is time for everything. Let's keep it pure!

That was chapter one.

There are six more, and a conclusion. The book runs to 156 pages and it is not written for worship leaders only. It is written for every believer.

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