

The Worship of the God of The Bible

Part 1

John 4:24 [NIV] *“God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

* * * * *

Joshua 24:19 [NIV] *“Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.”*

The God of The Bible is admittedly and unapologetically a jealous god.

Joshua 24:20-25 [NIV] *“If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.” But the people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the LORD.” Then Joshua said, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD.” “Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied. “Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.” And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.”*

As part of the covenant we make with the God of The Bible is to only worship the One God and to yield our hearts to Him.

Isaiah 42:8 [NIV] *“I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”*

The God of The Bible will not tolerate any rivals, He is the only One to be worshipped.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 [NIV] *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.”*

The God of The Bible is very possessive; we all belong to Him.

Exodus 20:2-6 [NIV] *“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. “You shall have no other gods before me. “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.”*

The God of The Bible wants to be worshipped.

Psalms 8:1-2 [Living Bible] *“O Lord our God, the majesty and glory of your name fills all the earth and overflows the heavens. You have taught the little children to praise you perfectly, may their example shame and silence your enemies!”*

Every aspect of God’s creation cries out for us to praise and adore the great Creator God.

Psalms 34:9 [NIV] *“Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing.”*

The God of The Bible desires to be feared, served and relied on. The rest of this psalm points us towards practical ways to have fear [awesome respect] of our Creator God, to serve Him and rely on Him.

Why is the study of how to worship God important?

Worship touches the heart of the God of The Bible, our Creator. God is moved when we worship Him.

When we learn how God wants us to worship Him we are learning how we can praise Him.

There is a widespread interest in “*worship*” these days in many Christian circles, and I suspect there is a matched widespread ignorance of what God’s Word tells us of how we are to worship the God of The Bible.

In the New Testament there are two Greek words that are translated “*worship*”.

a) Prōskunēō [pros-koo-neh-o] reverence towards – adore – to prostrate and kiss [like a dog licking his master’s hand].

Used 60 times in New Testament.

John 4:24 [NIV] “*God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.*”

The word refers to the condition of the heart and intellect.

John 4:24 [Message Bible] “*Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth.*”

b) Latrēuō [lat-ri-ah] to minister – serve – render homage.

The word is used when referring to public worship.

Philippians 3:3 [NIV] “*For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh...*”

True worship is when our spirit is prompted by the Holy Spirit. Worship is the consummation of our spirit and the Holy Spirit.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] “*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.*”

This sacrifice is parallel to the burn offering sacrifice of the Old Covenant.

Not one part of this sacrifice was returned to the person making the sacrifice. It was totally burnt up on the altar.

Both of these words are used to refer to attitudes and actions that are spirit-led and spirit-controlled worship.

Worship involves a total sacrifice of body, soul [heart] and spirit [intellect or mind].

Worship includes our preparation for hearing the preached word

Worship, properly understood, makes preaching central.

1 Corinthians 1:21 [NIV] “*For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.*”

Our response as we are listening to the preached Word and our changed lifestyle because of the preached Word bring glory to God and our worship towards God.

Titus 1:1-3 [NIV] *“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour...”*

We can only worship to the degree we have heard from God. Our ability to show God how we feel is the result of having heard His Word preached.

Worship can also be preparation for the preached Word

Singing God’s praise and reading His Word prepares our hearts to receive the precious understanding of Who our Creator God is and what Great Love He has for us.

Such knowledge and understanding only comes from His Word, hence preaching is paramount to true worship.

The aim of worship is to glorify God and edify our soul [heart]

We glorify God on two levels:

a) Through gratitude:-

When we express our sincere thanks for all the blessings, physical and spiritual, that God has showered on us all.

b) Through acknowledging God’s excellence:-

When we worship God purely for who and what He is.

God’s transcendence:-

Exodus 33:18-23 [NIV] *“Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.” And the LORD said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no-one may see me and live.” Then the LORD said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”*

The glory of God is beyond any level of human experience.

To see the “face” of God would be to know God perfectly. In Hebrew terms the “face” was the expression of the inner secret feelings and motives.

We are allowed to see God’s back, and in such a vision we see such glory that will generate enough desire to follow Him wherever.

We are to “seek His face”, that is, to know God as much as He is willing to reveal.

Not “seek His hand”, that is a continual request for blessings or authority.

God's immanence:-

Galatians 4:6 [NIV] *“Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”*

The personal nearness of God that allows us to have a close intimate relationship.

In spite of God's glory, mystery, power, majesty and being sovereign over all creation, He desires an intimate personal relationship with each of us.

It is within the intimate personal relationship that true worship can take place.

God has His own idea of how He wants to be worshipped

When it comes to worship we must ask the question:-

Who am I aiming to please, God or myself?

Is my style of worship actually doing something to please God Himself?

Or is my style of worship doing more to experience personal pleasure?

Let me give you a personal physical example:

A friend of mine, out of gratitude for the way I had helped him when in trouble, wanted to treat me to a meal in a restaurant. He asked where would I like to go, and I mentioned my favourite place, but he replied, *“Yes, that may be fine, but I know a place that you will like, shall I take you there?”*

I still insisted that my favourite place is where I would like him to take me.

What was the real motive behind my friend's insistence on this different restaurant?

I knew why, my favourite restaurant was going to cost him more!!

Is our worship of God like this; if we worship Him in a way His Word tells us would please Him it is going to cost us more?

In fact, we will see it will cost us our very lives.

The wonderful irony is that when we do worship God in exactly the way He tells us to, we find that our personal pleasure is far beyond what we ever imagined.

There is only one way to worship the God of The Bible

Philippians 3:3 [NIV] *“For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship **by the Spirit of God**, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh...”*

Note:- We see it is specified that we worship God *“by the Spirit”* if we are the circumcised of God, His chosen people.

John 6:63 [NIV] *“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”*

What we do in the flesh turns God off, it counts for nothing.

Zechariah 4:6 [NIV] *“So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.”*

What we do in the spirit gets God’s attention.

How do we accomplish this kind of worship?

Objectively:-

We get God’s attention by affirming what He wants of us.

a) To know God as He is

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

God’s greatest desire is to give us eternal life.

1 Corinthians 2:2 [NIV] *“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”*

The driving force in Paul’s life was to know Jesus and hence to know God.

b) To explore the truth about God

John 16:13 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

To be led by the Holy Spirit is to “worship by the spirit”.

John 14:6 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”*

To study and meditate on the life of Jesus is to “worship by the spirit”.

John 17:17 [NIV] *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”*

To study the written word of God is to “worship by the spirit”.

c) To honour God’s Son

John 16:14-16 [NIV] *“He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”*

Our relationship with the Holy Spirit will bring honour and glory to Jesus.

We “see” Jesus only through the special presence of the Holy Spirit who can make Jesus as “real” to us as He was to the disciples as they walked with Him during His physical life on earth.

These three acts of worshipping by the spirit focus on the excellence of God.

We can also accomplish this kind of worship.

Subjectively:-

a) **We get God's attention by allowing the ungrieved spirit to led us.**

Romans 8:14-16 [NIV] *"...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."*

The "Abba Father" intimate relationship with God is the result of the special presence of the ungrieved Holy Spirit. We have to personally experience the warm, peaceful state of mind, that I cannot really describe to you. At such a time, only one thing matters, God and our relationship with Him.

Matthew 6:33 [NIV] *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

Our total concentration is on God and His Kingdom, not the kingdoms of this society.

b) **We get God's attention by thanking Him for what He has done for us.**

Colossians 2:6-7 [NIV] *"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."*

"Overflowing" we can never thank God enough for every thing about us and what happens to us in the life He has given to us and sustains for us.

Revelation 7:9-12 [NIV] *"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing round the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"*

When we bountifully thank God now on earth we prepare ourselves for our future role of worshipping our Creator God. We are adding our thanks and praise now to that being given by the heavenly host around the Throne of God.

c) **We get God's attention by praising Him for who He is.**

Psalms 71:8, 14-19, 23-24 [NIV] *"My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendour all day long." ... "But as for me, I shall always have hope; I will praise you more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure. I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone. Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvellous deeds. Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come. Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God, you who have done great things. Who, O God, is like you?" ... "My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you, I, whom you have redeemed. My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion."*

Here we see expressed a life of continually praising God for the wonders of His creation, for the perfection of His ways and for His great love and mercy. There was no part of the psalmist's life which was devoid of praising God. What an example for us to follow.

These three aspects of worship focus on our gratitude towards our Creator God and redeemer.

One big assumption in all the above is that we are worshipping by an ungrieved Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a sensitive person and can be grieved.

Ephesians 4:22-32 [NIV] *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

The Holy Spirit is grieved when our lives are still harbouring un-confessed and un-forgiven sins.

1 John 1:5-10 [NIV] *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”*

We are **not** led by or walk with the Holy Spirit [God] when we have not put right before God our personal lives.

The Holy Spirit can be quenched.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-24 [NIV] *“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”*

We quench the enthusiasm [God in us], that we can receive by the indwelling of a special presence of the Holy Spirit, by **not** letting the Holy Spirit be Himself.

How then do we allow the Holy Spirit be Himself in our lives?

- a) The Holy Spirit is God, therefore He must be Sovereign in our lives, His will not ours.
- b) The Holy Spirit desires to lead us, we must be willing to follow, even when we cannot understand the direction He is leading us.
- c) The Holy Spirit is the only source of truth, He is the One who reveals the truth which is only found in God’s Word, The Christian Bible.

Acts 17:11 [NIV] *“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”*

We approach God's Word guided by the Holy Spirit with a positive approach to prove to ourselves that it is true.

What then is true worship?

It is worship helped by the Holy Spirit.

It is worship that is a result of the Holy Spirit's impulse.

It is worship that seeks only to bring pleasure to God so must be led by the Indwelling Holy Spirit.

Let us all seek to worship our Creator God in this way.