

How God Evaluates Worship

John 4:23-24 [New King James] *“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. **God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**”*

Two attributes are included in this statement made by our Saviour and Lord, **spirit and truth.**

The Greek word translated “spirit” is “*pnēuma*” the “*human spirit*” that gives us intellect.

1 Corinthians 2:11 [New King James] *“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”*

It is this “*human spirit*” in every human being that separates humans from animals, [**Daniel 4:24-37**].

Job 32:8 [New King James] *“But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him **understanding.**”*

The Hebrew word translated “*understanding*” is “*bîyn*” meaning to separate mentally, perceive, think.

Proverbs 20:27 [New King James] *“The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart.”*

It is through this “*human spirit*” that the Creator God knows us and contacts us.

Human intellect contributes to worship but God is not looking for something brilliant.

Psalms 51:17 [New King James] *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, these, O God, You will not despise.”*

The humble heart is what will please God, when we approach Him in prayer with an attitude of what we are compared with the Creator God we are worshipping.

Genesis 3:19 [New King James] *“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”*

This is what we are, dust in which the Creator God has planted the “*human spirit*” through which He can mould our character to make us into something that is acceptable to a Holy Creator God, [Isaiah 64:8; Romans 9:20-21].

The second attribute is truth –

John 17:17 [New King James] *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”*

God’s Word, the Christian Bible, is the truth, which is personified by Jesus Christ, [John 14:6].

All our prayers must have as their foundation what we read in the Christian Bible, asking for anything that is not in harmony with God’s Word is not acceptable in any way to the eternal God.

John 15:15-16 [New King James] *“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should*

go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

To ask in Jesus Christ’s name means it must be in total harmony with His character, [1 John 3:22].

True worship treasures God’s presence –

God welcomes those into His presence who want Him. The quest may be one of desperation or of delight, of frantic need or of a loving hunger for fellowship in a hostile world.

Exodus 33:13-14 [New King James] *“Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.” And He said, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’”*

This is part of the tender and powerful exchange that takes place between the Creator God and Moses, recorded in chapters 33 and 34.

Shortly after this, God displays His glory to Moses as a sure sign of His pleasure and presence, [Exodus 40:33-38].

True worship involves sacrifice –

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.**”*

The sacrifice that is being referred to is the *“burn offering”* sacrifice [**Leviticus 6:30**] where the whole body of the sacrificial animal was burnt up on the altar.

The Greek word translated *“bodies”* is *“soma”* meaning whole life, the physical body, our mind or heart, the motivating part of our life and the *“human spirit”* through which the Holy Spirit can work.

This is an act of true worship of the Creator God.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

As a result of such gratitude and personal sacrificial worship the Holy Spirit will gradually re-educate our mind so that the *“fruits”* of the Holy Spirit, which are the very characteristics of the eternal God, will mature in us, [Galatians 5:22-25].

True worship extends God’s love to others –

Romans 5:5 [New King James] *“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

A better translation of the preposition *“en”* is *“through”* instead of *“in”*, this then harmonises this scripture with that in John.

John 7:38-39 [New King James] *“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”*

The Holy Spirit cannot be stagnant, it has to flow [John 3:8] out of us in acts of love and compassion for others.

How does this happen? –

By forgiving others, seeking peace and reconciliation day by day.

By living a gracious life, living out what we believe is a powerful witness.

By unselfishness, having a servant-minded attitude in assisting the needs of others including a heart that cares for the victims of neglect and injustice.

To worship God in “*spirit and in truth*” we have to go **beyond** tightly regimented gatherings, which are praise and adoration of our God in psalms and songs.

True worship is very much a personal thing, a one-to-one time spent with our Creator that leads to changes in the way we conduct our day-to-day life and our relationships with other human beings.

We need a continual thirst for God’s presence, a focus that will not be vulnerable to the arthritis of ritualism.

John 7:37 [New King James] “*On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.’*”

A thirst for this closer relationship with our Creator God is a continual theme through God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

Revelation 22:16-17 [New King James] “*I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*”

As with every article or sermon the final words are the most important, for it is what will be taken away with the reader or hearer.

Revelation 22:20-21 [New King James] “*He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*”

The “coming quickly” could be tomorrow for any human being.

Luke 12:15-21 [New King James] “*And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’ Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?”’ So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*”

We “lay up treasure towards God” through active and true worship of Him that allows Him to transform our lives to be in harmony with His.