

PRAISE & WORSHIP 5

JUST WORSHIP



Introduction

We often hear people praising others. It may be their children, a popular singer, or someone else they admire. The one who deserves praise above all others is the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to be a people of praise. This is something God's Word commands us to do, and it is something we need to choose to do. As we learn to praise, it prepares us to enter into worship. In this study we will learn about worship – who do we really worship and what is worship.

1. WHO DO WE WORSHIP?

A. God's Word says 'Worship the Lord your God'

God told his people that they were to only worship him, and not to make idols or images of any thing or anyone else.

Exodus 20:3-5 *'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.'*

?? What sort of things do people make into idols? What other things do they worship? Discuss.

Man has made all kinds of animals, birds and strange creatures into idols. Others worship the rivers, trees or mountains. However there are many who may not make idols but they have put their possessions before God and these have become their gods. For some TV is their idol. Others are totally controlled by their own desires and self is their god. Many young people idolise film stars, rock singers, sportsmen or cult leaders. All men worship something.

Who or what are we truly worshipping? Going to church on a Sunday does not necessarily mean that we worship God. To obey the first commandment we must love, worship and serve God as the most important person in our life, above everything and everyone else – always!

What are the results of disobeying the first commandment?

Exodus 20:5 *'...punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me ...'*

We can see that who we worship is very important. Many people and even nations are suffering because their ancestors' worshipped other gods. Praise the Lord we can be free from this curse by the blood of Jesus and start a new family tree that has God's blessing. In the next verse we see the reward for those who worship God.

Exodus 20:6 *'...but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.'*

We were created to worship God and when we obey him, we experience the blessing he intended for our lives. Not only that, this blessing can be extended up to a thousand generations.

B. Satan says, 'Bow down and worship me'

God created us to worship him, but Satan has always struggled to get man's worship. Originally Satan was one of the most beautiful angels that God created. He was called the 'Morning Star'. However he became proud and rebelled against God, as we see in the prophecy in Isaiah 14. Notice how he says, 'I will' five times.

Isaiah 14:13-14 *'You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."*

As a result of his rebellion he was thrown out of Heaven and now rules from the heavenly realms. When God first created man, Satan was jealous for man's worship, and thus tempted man to obey him rather than God. Sadly when man did this, he came under Satan's dominion. And that is still true today.

Jesus came to make a way for us to return to God. Satan even tried to tempt Jesus!

?? What did Satan want Jesus to do and why did he refuse? See Matthew 4:8-9, 10

Satan promised Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if he would bow down and worship him. Jesus refused! In the last days before Jesus returns to this earth, Satan's struggle to gain the worship of mankind will reach a climax. He will try and gain worship by using a world leader, who the Bible calls the Antichrist. Look in the book of Revelation to see what his ambition is.

Revelation 13:14-15 *'...he ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.'*

Just as Jesus refused to bow down to Satan, so we must never bow down to anyone or anything. Bowing expresses worship. Our answer must always be the answer Jesus gave, "I will worship the Lord and only him will I serve."

2. WHAT IS WORSHIP?

In the Old and New Testaments there are two words for worship. The first speaks of the 'act' of worship, where a person bows down in honour of God. The second is used for work that is done for God. Jesus put worship first, and then told us to serve him. In this study we will look only at the first meaning of the word 'worship'.

A. Worship is an act

Worship is expressed by bowing down. In fact this is the literal meaning of the word 'worship' in the Old Testament. In the New Testament the most common word for 'worship' means, 'to kiss the hand or the ground'. The act of bowing is worship. This is what Satan wanted Jesus to do.

Matthew 4:9 *"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."*

In traditional churches there has been much bowing, and this is not wrong, but over the years it has sometimes become just an outward action. However let's see what John did when he saw Jesus on the Island of Patmos.

Revelation 1:17 *'When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.'*

Although John had known Jesus as a man on earth, he now saw him in all his glory, power and holiness. He responded by falling at his feet in worship. This was not just an outward action as John was 'in the spirit' at that time, but he expressed his worship by bowing down. This is true worship. As we sense God's holiness more and more in our midst we will want to worship him by bowing or kneeling down.

B. Worship is from our spirit

?? How are we to worship God and why? See John 4:23-24

God created us to be like himself. God is Spirit and he created us a spirit being. God's desire is that we will worship him and have deep fellowship with him – from his Spirit to ours. However when sin came into the world, man's spirit was deadened. He could no longer worship God from his spirit or have close fellowship with God.

Jesus said, "The time is coming and has now come when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." What does this mean? Jesus was saying that the time had come when he was going to die for men's sin and make a way for him to come back to God. When a man or woman turns to him he will be forgiven by God and his spirit will be born again by the Spirit of God. He will now be able to worship God from his spirit.

?? What do you think it really means to 'worship God in spirit'?

When we worship 'in spirit' it doesn't mean that we no longer need to express our worship by using our hands, mouths and bodies. Some may say, "but that is only outward". It is true that just the outward actions alone do not offer the kind of worship that pleases the father. True worship flows from the inside to the outside.

Conclusion

The Father is looking for those whose hearts are cleansed from sin, whose lives are filled with the Holy Spirit and who long to come into his presence to love him and have fellowship with him. He is looking for those who will express that love to him with all their beings – their spirits, minds, bodies, emotions and their wills. This is true worship.