

TRUE WORSHIPERS

Today, I want to talk to you about worship. I don't think we realize how central this idea of worship and who are the "true" worshippers is in the biblical narrative. When you examine Scripture you will notice that worship is the way God has distinguished His people from the world.

- Worship was used to separate the line of Cain from the line of Abel/Seth.
- Again, after the flood, worship was used to separate men at Babel.
- When God was ready to establish His covenant with man, it was worship that caused Him to call Abram out of the land of the Chaldeans.
- Then 400 years later, worship was the reason God brought the descendants of Abraham out of the land of Egypt.
- Lastly, when Israel was in the wilderness, worship was at the heart of the decalogue (Ten Commandments) that God gave to Moses.

Even as I was preparing to close out this year, worship came to my mind. In fact, God brought back to my remembrance what He challenged us with at the start of this year. If you remember, we said that 2023 would be The Year of Dedication. What's interesting about "dedication" is how closely it is related to *worship*!

Romans 12:1

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, HOLY, acceptable unto God, *which is your REASONABLE SERVICE.*

Romans 12:1 GOOD NEWS BIBLE

1 So then, my brothers and sisters, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, DEDICATED to his service and pleasing to him. This is the TRUE WORSHIP that you should offer.

The GNB translates the word 'holy' as DEDICATE. This is because when most modern readers see the word 'holy' they ONLY think of moral purity. However, the primary meaning of the word 'holy' is to be *set apart* (consecrated, dedicated) to God. Moreover, Paul calls this act of dedication "true" worship. Therefore, 2023 was as much about worship as it was about dedication. In fact, 2023 was to be a kind of separation, where the true worshipers are separated from the false worshipers. What does it mean to be a "true" worshiper of God?

John 4:23

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the TRUE WORSHIPERS shall worship the Father IN SPIRIT and IN TRUTH: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

According to Jesus, a “true” worshiper is someone who worships IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH!

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT

When the Bible talks about doing something “in spirit” it often means doing it in a *spiritual* way (as opposed to merely a *physical* way).

Matthew 15:7–9

7 Ye HYPOCRITES, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me WITH THEIR MOUTH, and honoureth me WITH THEIR LIPS; but their HEART IS FAR FROM ME. 9 But in VAIN they do worship me,

The Scribes and the Pharisees believed they were performing worship by their external movements (lips and mouth). However, Jesus tells us that if ONLY our lips and our mouth are moving in worship, then our worship is vain (i.e. not true worship)!

John 4:19–21

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshipped IN THIS MOUNTAIN; and ye say, that in JERUSALEM is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall NEITHER IN THIS MOUNTAIN, NOR YET AT JERUSALEM, worship the Father.

This woman believed that true worship is performed by visiting some external *place* (“this mountain”). However, Jesus points out that the *true* “place” of worship is *not* physical. It’s spiritual!

Hebrews 12:18

18 For ye are not come unto the MOUNT that might be TOUCHED, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Notice, we are not coming to any mountain that we can *touch*. In other words, when we come to worship, we’re coming to a *spiritual* place not a physical one!

Hebrews 12:22–23

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the HEAVENLY Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and CHURCH of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to THE SPIRITS of just men made perfect,

Notice, it's our *spirits* that are on this mountain! Therefore, we not only worship God in the spirit, but we worship Him with our spirit!

Now, I don't want to give the impression that worship is ONLY done in the spirit or with our spirit. *True* worship might BEGIN in the spirit (or with our spirit), but it also has a *physical* component to it.

Romans 12:1

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your BODIES a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

Therefore, our “bodies” are *also* involved in worship. This means that worship is *not* passive, but *active*. But, before we rush out and start doing what we THINK is worship, let's make sure our “thinking” is in line with God's *word* and not with the *world!* In other words, let's make sure our worship is *in truth*.

WORSHIP IN TRUTH

Romans 12:2

² And BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD: but be ye transformed by the RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, WILL OF GOD.

A true worshiper will worship the Father “in truth” or according to His will.

John 9:31

³¹ Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be A WORSHIPPER of God, and DOETH HIS WILL, him he heareth.

Again, a *worshiper of God* is someone who does the *will of God!* Moreover, someone who does the will of God will not try to devise their own plan for worship.

Hebrews 11:4

⁴ By faith Abel offered unto God a MORE EXCELLENT sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that HE WAS RIGHTEOUS,

What made Abel's sacrifice “better” than Cain's? Cain's sacrifice was based on works. He tried to win favor with God through his sacrifice. However, Abel did not seek to win favor through his sacrifice. He believed God and offered what he was commanded!

There are people today who try to use worship (their service) as a means of winning favor with God. As a result, they have devised their own ideas of worship.

Colossians 2:18, 23

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a VOLUNTARY HUMILITY and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in WILL WORSHIP,

“Will worship” is worship that is men come up with in their own minds. Thus, their devotion and worship is not according to the commands of God. Some people are not content to worship God the way He commanded. They are constantly looking for “new and improved” ways to worship!

The problem with worshipping God according to our own will (aside from the fact that it’s not according to truth) is the fact that such worship does not crucify the flesh.

Colossians 2:18, 23

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly PUFFED UP BY HIS FLESHLY MIND, 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; NOT IN ANY HONOUR TO THE SATISFYING OF THE FLESH.

Apparently, it’s possible to “neglect the body” without doing any damage to the “flesh!” If our worship does not crucify the flesh, then it’s not serving its purpose. *True* worship is supposed involve a “sacrifice” ([Romans 12:1](#)). However, when worship is promoting envy, strife, jealousy and competition, then according to [Galatians 5:19-21](#) our worship is *satisfying* the flesh, not sacrificing it!

Again, if we want to be true worshipers, then we must approach worship from a spiritual, and not just an external, standpoint. This means we must incorporate spiritual elements into our worship (sincerity, unity, repentance, faith). Also, to be true worshipers, we must worship God in truth. Meaning, we must worship according to His will (what He has prescribed). A lot of our worship is sensual and satisfies the flesh, as opposed to spiritual and sacrificing the flesh!