

# DISCERNING BIBLICAL WORSHIP

## OBJECTIVES

- DEFINITION OF WORSHIP
- OBJECT OF WORSHIP
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## INTRODUCTION

The subject under study is the one most important one. Human beings were created to Worship God. Worship is the ultimate priority in this side of heaven. Human beings were created to worship God every human being is created with the sense that God exist and the sense that they owe him allegiance or worship. According to Robert. H.Mounce in the New American commentary states, **“Anthropologists confess that they are unable to find a tribe of people anywhere in the world who do not worship some sort of divine being.”** The fall distorted the purpose of existence. Man who was created in the image of God so that he should be worshipping the true living God began to start worshipping himself. He started worshipping himself. In Gen.3:12, Man blamed God for his failures and he was removed from the garden but in Gen.3:15, God and not worshipping God is abnormal to man. A.W Tozer in his book “whatever happened to worship” states **“There is no tribe in all the world that does not have some kind of religion and some form of worship. Men and Women have an instinct toward worship.”**

## DEFINITION OF WORSHIP

The Hebrew word “*shachah*” and the Greek word “*proskuneo*” account for more than 80% of the appearances of the word “worship” in most English versions of the Bible, so these are the two words with which we want to concern ourselves. There are a few other words that are occasionally translated “worship” but have a more specific meaning outside of the idea of worship, and really should be translated differently. A study of the Hebrew word *shachah* and the Greek word *proskuneo* reveals that both these words mean “to bow down.” The Hebrew word *shachah* (Strong’s number 7812) is used of bowing or prostrating oneself, often before a superior or before God. In the *King James Version*, it is translated by a number of different English words, including: “worship” (99 times), “bow” (31 times), “bow down” (18 times), “obeisance” (9 times), and “reverence” (5 times). The Greek word *proskuneo* (Strong’s number 4505) comes from the Greek words *pros*, “to” or “toward,” and *kuneo*, “to kiss.” It literally means to kiss the hand to (toward) someone in token of reverence, and among the Orientals, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence. Hence, in the New Testament it means kneeling or prostration to do homage or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication.

John Frame defines worship as “the work of acknowledging the greatness of our covenant Lord”. It may mean also “paying homage, honoring the worth of someone else”. So when you talk about

worship, what you are talking about is basically performing service to honor somebody other than yourself.

Therefore, we can define Worship as Reverent devotion and allegiance pledged to God.

## OBJECT OF WORSHIP

We see that in the Old Testament worship was central. We see this by how the tabernacle was designed and located at the center of the camp. In Exodus 20:1-5 when God gave the Decalogue to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, He commanded them not to Worship any other god before him. He is the only one who deserves to be worshiped. promised a deliverer who will restore worship again in the future. In the New Testament we see Jesus Christ coming to restore that which was lost in the Garden of Eden. Col.1:20-22. Jesus Christ came to reconcile all things to himself. Sin made it impossible for man to worship God. In John 4:24- Jesus announced to the Samaritan woman that God is seeking worshipers. He is not just looking for any worshipers but true worshipers. These true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Worship is the right response to a redeemed man. A person who has experienced the transforming power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel will rightly respond in Worship. Worship is a right response to God's redeeming grace on the part of a believer.

## APPLICATION:

Is what is going on in the Churches today "WORSHIP" or is it entertainment. The songs are all about self. It is full of materialism. God has been reduced to a magician who when you say the right magic words he gives you what you want. What is called Gospel is not the Biblical gospel but the social Gospel. Songs are centered on self. There is music competition in the Church and the best choir is given some money and it is about money. Dancing is seductive. Choir members are simply dancing queens on the stage.

The object of worship in our day is also on the so called "man of God". What he says is biblical true regardless of what he says whether it is true or false. Mal.3:10 – God instructed the Israelites to bring the tithes in the store house and not to the man of God. When the man of God is preaching we see them giving them offering to God.

True worship demands many things but in our study we shall look at

A few questions to consider as we learn about biblical worship: What has caused these worship wars? What are they? What does biblical worship look like and what doesn't it look like? How are we to practically implement it in our daily lives? And more importantly, what do the Scriptures teach

about worship especially in light of the contemporary movement of worship and praise music and literature that is abounding today? In other words, what does it mean to live in the presence of His glory everyday?

### **FALSE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP**

In order to fully understand what biblical worship is, let's begin by taking a brief look at seven things that biblical worship is not though they might seem to define how many of us truly function in worship today.

#### **1. Biblical Worship is not Emotional excitement**

Firstly, biblical "worship," as the early church was initially prone to call it, is not emotional exuberance. People often mistake goose bumps with God and try to work themselves into an emotional froth or ecstatic frenzy which they hope brings them closer to the Lord. In saying that, I am not advocating emotionless worship. Worship does involve our emotions; and emotionless worship maybe reveals a hard calloused heart before the Lord. But using our emotions or focusing on an emotional response to try and achieve worship is something else altogether. Worship is primarily cognitive—it begins with knowing and understanding the Lord. Although emotions have their proper place. John 4:24.

The danger is this, when the emotions fade usually the walk with Christ does too. This spiritual roller coaster ride can only satisfy that emotional craving for so long and then the essence of their commitment to Christ is ultimately revealed. Tragically, when they crash... they crash hard and leave many disillusioned people in the wake of their enthusiastic fancy. In reality, what they possess is a superstitious view of God, where faith is nothing more than doubt looking for proof. David warns about this in [Psalm 2:11](#) and instructs us in the balance of real worship when saying, "*Serve the Lord with reverence; rejoice with trembling.*" Worship begins with reverence—the fear of the Lord; joy and celebration is what follows; and with a note of exhortation, "*with trembling.*" Our celebration (rejoicing) must never lead to carnality (with trembling). We must always have at the core of our worship the fear of the Lord and a sobering reverence for Him. There is no substitution for a consistent, holy, obedient, worthy walk in Christ. Application is that emotions without the truth is just acting and not worship on the other hand, truth without the emotions is dead orthodoxy.

#### **2. Biblical Worship is not supernatural Experience**

Secondly, authentic biblical worship is not mystical experience. The quintessential example of this would be what became known as "The Toronto Blessing." This movement was born initially at the Kansas City School of Prophets and given world-wide visibility at a church in Toronto, I discovered that "the blessing" was marked by three key things: one, holy roaring. This is where one will bark like a dog, crow like a bird, etc. – or manifest some sort of animal sound or noise. Two, holy laughter. This is where uncontrollable boisterous laughter will occur for sometimes hours on end. And three, the most blasphemous element of this movement, is what they call holy vomiting. They claim if the Spirit of God is truly cleansing an individual's life, it will be manifested by vomiting. Some when shown from scripture will even prove that these things are not sanctioned and caused by the Lord, but their reply will always be simply, "*we know that it doesn't exist in Scripture, but that doesn't concern us because you can't deny the fruit of what's happening in people's lives here.*" Again, personal religious experience is elevated over the truth of God's Word.

Just to comment briefly, laughter is always used in Scripture in a derisive way and only mentioned one time in all the N.T. (James 4:8). I found that many were confusing laughter with joy. If laughter was a sign of God's grace in one's life, then Jim Carrey has to be the most holy man alive today! Joy, on the other hand, is not fleeting or frivolous; it is the quiet confidence that God is in control of all things for His glory and our good. Listen, beloved, it is never a funny thing to come into the presence of a holy God; but it is a frightening thing ([cf. Hebrews 10:31](#)). Lastly, vomiting is not a sign of cleansing spiritually. This again, can be found nowhere in the Bible or practiced in any church in all of redemptive history.

### **3. Biblical Worship is not Musical Performance**

When most people think of worship today they usually think of singing. They separate the preaching of God's Word as one thing and then "worship" in song as another. Musical performance or frankly, music or songs in and of themselves is not worship. The song is but a tool to express worth to the Lord in accordance with His Word. Even the phrase, "worship leader" or "worship pastor" is misleading, isn't it?

In the Levitical priesthood and temple according to [1 Chron. 23:5](#), there were "4,000 gatekeepers, and 4,000 shall offer praises to the LORD with the instruments that I have made for praise."

[1 Chron. 15:22,27](#) says: "*Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was {in charge of} the singing; he gave instruction in singing because he was skillful [in divine revelation and in the craft of music too]. Now David was clothed with a robe of fine linen with all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers and Chenaniah the leader of the singing {with} the singers. David also wore an ephod of linen.*"

Notice here that the temple worship of the Levites sprung first of all from revelation then to the singing. "Thy statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." His lawbook our songbook; His Word our music; His theology, our doxology.

Listen to these powerful words that the Lord spoke through the shepherd-prophet Amos, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" ([Amos 5:21-24](#)).

Why was God declaring their worship unacceptable? Why was it an offense to Him? Was Israel making bad music? Was their worship to the Lord heretical in lyric? No. But here is the reason: beautiful songs of praise with great biblical lyrics sung out of an impure life are nothing but noise to the ears of a holy God. We ought to be Spirit-filled beloved! The message is so clear: *stop the music until the life is right*.

#### **THE PURPOSE OF MUSIC IN OUR WORSHIP**

(a) The Purpose is to Praise God. Psalm 104:33

The Principle is that singing is Praying. Eph. 5:19b

1. The primary audience of our music is GOD! Psalm 40:3
2. The primary goal of our music is GODS pleasure. Rev. 4:11, Col 1:16.
- (b) The second purpose of music is to encourage believers. 1 Cor. 14:2
  1. The principles are that singing is testifying through teaching. Col.3:16
  2. Singing is testifying through admonishing . Col.3:16

#### Macquarie Dictionary

- a. To counsel against something; caution or advice
- b. To notify of or reprove for a fault
- c. To recall or incite to duty; remind

#### 4. Biblical Worship is not Religious Ritual

Fourthly, biblical worship is not religious ritual or ceremony. Liturgy, ceremony, confessions and creeds have their place, but in and of themselves, they do not constitute true worship. Religious rites must never take precedence over our obedience to the Lord. Remember the adamant words of the prophet Samuel to King Saul; “Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of rams” [\(1 Samuel 15:22\)](#).

#### 5. Biblical Worship is not Asceticism

Fifthly, true biblical worship is not self-flagellation or asceticism. The Apostle Paul deals powerfully with this in [Colossians 2:20-23](#), *“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations- ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using-according to the command- ments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgences of the flesh.”* I grew up in Wheaton, Il – the Vatican II; the holy city. I was taught that if I didn’t dance, didn’t drink, didn’t smoke, didn’t play cards and didn’t go to movies that I had somehow reached the zenith of spiritual holiness. I learned many years ago that if I didn’t dance, didn’t drink, didn’t smoke, didn’t play cards and didn’t go to movies, all that that meant was, was that I didn’t dance, didn’t drink, didn’t smoke, didn’t play cards and didn’t go to movies. The absence of those things do not make one holy before the Lord, amen? That is why the thrust of our lives should not be the denial of certain things which may have the appearance of “religion,” but to be conformed daily to the image and person of Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### 6. Biblical Worship is not Self-Indulgence

Sixthly, biblical worship is not psychological self-indulgence. Coming to the house of the Lord consumed with our felt need concerns: my pain, my healing, my woundedness, my crippled inner child, anticipating some sort of psychological cathartic healing, devalues the very worship we long to honor Him with. Stephen Charnock expounds on this thought when saying, *“To pretend to pay homage to God and intend only the advantage of self is, rather, to mock Him than worship Him.*

*When we believe that we ought to be satisfied than God glorified, we set God below ourselves. Imagine, that He should submit His own honor to our advantage-we make our selves more glorious than God.”* Worship never begins or ends with man and his needs, but with God and His glory! We must “deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him” ([Matthew 16:24](#)).

## **7. Biblical Worship is not Self-Actualization**

Lastly, legitimate biblical worship is not self-actualization: realizing ones potentiality or reaching the fullness of ones dreams, aspirations, or goals. Achieving one’s expectations – that is the essence of the meaning here. The info-phrase “Be all that you can be...” gives flesh and bone as to “the why” many people approach God. Jesus did not come to give you a better marriage, a more fulfilling career or job, a better education, or a more satisfying existence. People approaching God in worship to achieve those things, in reality, only end up worshipping themselves – the greatest of all idols.

## **TRUE THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS ABOUT WORSHIP**

### **1. BIBLICAL WORSHIP IS GOD-CENTERED**

We saw in the definition that worship is homage paid to God. Worship is not primarily for ourselves. We worship for his pleasure foremost and our greatest pleasure in pleasing him. Biblical worship must and should always be God-centred and Christ centred. ( Ex.15:1-18; Ps.104, \*Rom.11:36, Rev.4:11). Biblical Worship does not try to promote our worthiness or glorifying ourselves or further pleasing ourselves but God. It should not be about us, but it should always be about God and what he has done for us. Biblical worship is saturated with God’s lordship.

### **2. BIBLICAL WORSHIP IS GOSPEL-CENTERED.**

The Gospel has power to transform our lives. It is the only vehicle that God uses to transform peoples lives. According to John Frame “Redemption is the means; worship is the goal, worship is the whole point of everything. It is the purpose of history, the goal of the whole Christian story. Worship is not one segment of the Christian life among others; Worship is the entire Christian life.”

Rom.1:16-17.

## **CONCLUSION**

Not all what is called worship is worship. The challenge this morning is to go back to biblical worship and in order to do that we have to go to scripture and see it from there. Be a scripture saturated Christian and then you will be able to discern biblical worship.