

Does It Really Matter How We Worship God?

Bible Answers About Worship

The Bible reveals the nature and will of God to man and one of the great themes is worship. Although the Word of God tells us whom to worship, it never commands us simply to worship. But, does it really matter how we worship God?

In speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well Jesus stated the principles of proper worship to God when He said, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. "You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:21-24 NAS; cf. Acts 17:29-31; Rev. 19:10).

The object of true worship is God "the Father," as Jesus said, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father...." The worship of any object, person or thing other than God the Father is vain worship. Whether the object is an idol of gold, silver or stone, or whether it is a job or the god of appetite, pleasure, fashion, family or knowledge, the result of worship directed toward any other object than the Father in heaven is to worship in vain (Acts 17:29-31). The design of worship is to enable the human being to discharge an obligation to the Creator in a way pleasing to God, in order to abide in His fellowship. If we understand the purpose of worship, we will not seek to make our worship impressive to men, but acceptable to God.

Since God is the object of true worship, it is essential that we learn His nature and understand His character (Acts 17:29-31). We cannot truly worship unless we have a Biblical concept of the God we worship. Otherwise, like the men of Athens in Paul's day, we will be worshipping an unknown god. Failure to recognize God's nature and to render proper homage to Him produced creature worship and plunged the world into idolatry and degradation before the coming of Jesus, as Paul establishes in the Roman letter (Rom. 1:18-25). Vain or ignorant worship still produces the same effect. We should worship the Father as Jesus teaches, because He made us like Himself and we are His creatures. By the right of creation we should worship the Father. It is natural and becoming for the creature to adore and worship the Creator (Psa. 100:3; Rev. 4:11). We should also worship the Father by right of redemption; we should worship Him because He loves us so much. He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (Jno. 3:16). A third reason for worshipping the Father in heaven is to become like Him (2 Cor. 3:18). People who worship an idol become like the idol in character (Psa. 135:15-18). Let us therefore worship God, the Father, with a sense of our own need as we cry out to Him for His help and power, to assist us in opening ourselves to the favor He is so ready and willing to give us if we will simply allow Him.

What is the standard of acceptable worship? What form of worship shall we follow in order to be acceptable? The standard by which we determine whether worship is true is not by its pomp or grandeur, or its power to please or impress the worshipper, or simply the sincerity of the worshipper. Jesus also said, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jno. 4:24). While those who worship God must be sincere for the worship to be acceptable to God, the sincerity of those who worship is not the standard which determines whether it is true. Jesus also said, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth" (John 17:17 NAS). The Word of God has always been the standard of acceptable worship. We must follow the truth. We cannot improve upon the divine form of worship. God has always specified the elements, acts or avenues of worship. In every age God has revealed specifically how men must worship. Vain, presumptuous worship has always displeased God. Notice the statement of Jesus, "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. 'But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'" (Matt 15:7-9 NAS; cf. Gen. 4:3; Lev. 10:1-3). To be acceptable to God, worship must be expressed from the heart and it must be "in truth" – that is, according to the teaching of God's word.

Only five items or avenues of worship are authorized by the New Testament: (1) Teaching God's word; (2) prayer; (3) observing the Lord's Supper each first day of the week; (4) giving of our means as God prospers us; and (5) singing and making melody in the heart; (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We have no authority to go beyond this because Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.... teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18, 20 NAS). We have no authority to teach something that is not authorized by Jesus. To go beyond that which is revealed in God's word is to separate ourselves from God as John points out, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into {your} house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds" (II Jn 1:9-11 NAS). To use other elements in our worship is to worship by presumption, not "by faith" (Heb. 11:1-6). Such is called "will worship" by Paul (Col. 2:23). Paul explains that such worship is of no value. Will worship is an act of worship of man's own devising, which rests upon the mere will of man, rather than an act which God has commanded. The novel and the new have their appeal to some, but to be acceptable to God our worship must be true – not novel and new.

If it was wrong, and it was, for people to change, alter, or modify the worship commanded by God in both the Old and New Testaments, then it is just as wrong today. It really does matter how we worship God. The church at Monte Vista worships as the church of the New Testament and we invite you to visit with us and worship God according to the authority of Jesus Christ.

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or
Stop by and worship with us!

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