

A Consideration of Worship

I. Why I believe knowledge of this is important

- A. Worship must be defined
- B. Worshiper has to understand these things
 - 1) Who God is
 - 2) Who he (the believer) is
- C. Worship should be practiced by all believers
- D. True worship of God will bring us into a closer relationship to Him

II. True Worship is a personal thing

- A. Worship in the Old Testament
 - 1) Early worship
 - 2) Worship at the time of Abraham
 - 3) David's worship of God
- B. Worship that is desired by God - it concerns the heart of man

III. The things that true worship involves

- A. It is to be of the spirit (the complete man)
- B. God's relationship to us
 - 1) Who we are before God
 - 2) Our gratitude and debt as one unholy declared holy
- C. Our relationship to God
 - 1) The study of and meditation upon His word
 - 2) The prayer life of the believer
 - 3) The praise of our Lord and Saviour

Conclusion: The consideration of worship

June 2009 David Doyle

A Consideration of Worship

Intro

In my years as a believer I can recall hearing only one message on the subject of the worship of God by believers. I have heard the subject mentioned many times, but only one message. For example, in the Old Testament, we read of many times when Israel worshipped the false gods of other nations. We have knowledge of the necessity of worship towards our God, yet I have to admit I have little knowledge of how to practice it. This study is about a few thoughts I have had concerning the subject, and I hope that you as a believer you will as I do, and that is give some consideration of the subject of the true worship of our Lord.

I. Why I believe knowledge of worship is important

Twenty some years ago I was a devoted member of the Baptist denomination. I recall something that was always said before the time of the passing of the collection plate. This was “Let us now worship the Lord with our tithes and offerings.” Since those days I have changed the way I look at things in many ways. One nagging thought that I have always had in the back of my mind over the passage of the years is what is the worship of God in this day? Do I truly worship the Lord God? Does the giving of money reflect the true worship of God?

In the past year or so I have wondered if we as believers understand or even practice the true worship of God. I understand that we may study the scripture and learn many things concerning God and the great value he has placed upon us because of His Son’s relationship us. I can’t help but wonder if I am missing something within my Christian experience by not understanding and perhaps not even practicing the true worship of my God and Saviour!

A. Worship must be defined

In order to consider anything we first have to get an understanding of the meaning of the subject. In the dictionary the term worship entails a veneration or sincere appreciation, adoration, and respect towards a Divine being. To venerate means to look upon or revere with the highest regard and respect. In terms of worship this is due to a deep sense of personal gratitude or respect due to having received Divine favor.

Our modern English word for worship comes from an Old Anglican word “we-ordh-scipe” which means “worthship” or worthiness, dignity or merit. The paying of homage

or respect to a dignity or Divine Being. In Old England, noblemen were referred to as 'your worship'. This included the lord of the manor, and of course the King.

In regards to God, this term denotes a reverence and devotion denoted by devotion and service. I sometimes wonder if we as believers today do not understand what worship really is. I wonder if true worship is ever practiced!

I think that often men believe they are showing their gratitude towards God by the services they perform in the flesh (while their heart is far from Him)! Can this be true worship? I believe that the warning our Lord gave to the religious rulers of Israel should be heeded by us as believers even in this day.

Matthew 15:8-9 "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

We as believers need to understand what is required by our God in the area of worship, as revealed within the teachings of His Word. In Exodus chapter 20 the nation of Israel (the believers of that era) are commanded to worship the one God only and not any of the false gods that were everywhere. Today, in the area of the worship of God, a believer must search his own heart to be sure that he actually worships God according to the principles that are Biblical, and be on guard against the deceptiveness of his own heart. Oftentimes we may be performing acts of adoration toward ourselves or the idea of God, instead of the one true living Being that is the God of all!

B. The worshipper needs to understand these things

In order to correctly worship the Lord, I believe that we need to have a correct understanding of two things. First of all, we need to know who God is; and secondly, we need to understand who we are. These two things were made evident to us upon our conversion by an act of the Holy Spirit of God. The stark comparison of ourselves with the complete holiness of God was the beginning of our understanding.

When Moses met God in the wilderness of Midian, God spoke to him from the burning bush. We may read of this account in Exodus chapter 3. In verses 5&6 we have evidence of Moses coming to a revelation of who he was in comparison to the Lord God.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

In this one verse we may see how Moses came to a realization of who he was in comparison to who God is. Prior to this, Moses had little knowledge of God on a personal basis. After the Lord revealed himself to Moses, he immediately understood that this Divine being was far greater than he was. He removed his shoes and hid his face in an act of worship before the Lord. I believe it was this correct view of who he was, in comparison to who God is, that gave Moses such fearless strength in all the things that the Lord told him to perform in the service of the Almighty.

In Matthew chapter 14 we read of the account of the Peter leaving the boat where he was with the others on the sea when they saw Jesus walking upon the water. Peter asked if he could meet him; and being told to come, he walked for a bit upon the waves. Soon the surrounding tempest grew too much for him and he called out for one far greater than he to save him from certain death from drowning. The result of this was a proclamation from those in the boat that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, and should be worshipped as one greater than they.

Peter, by stepping out, was in effect committing an act of worship, in that he relied upon one whose strength was far greater than his. Peter's realization of the frailty of his flesh was twofold. First, he realized his weakness and sought help from the Lord to perform the task. He stepped out on faith, (an act of worship). It may be the frailty of flesh that caused him to take his eyes off Christ, (failure to worship or rely upon one greater). As a result he fell into the sea. Failure due to the pride of self reliance results in lack of worship, which is adoration of and reliance upon a far greater power. Secondly, when Peter realized his lack of adoration of his Lord he called out for help, and as a result he was restored to a state of correct standing. A correct state of worship then existed between him and his Lord.

We all are familiar with the account of the conversion of Saul in Acts chapter 9. Saul, upon hearing the call of this same Jesus, whom he was persecuting by seeking the death of His followers, immediately fell upon his face in an act of worship and admission of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. From this point in his life onward, Saul, also known as Paul, was continually aware of the holiness of Christ and the unworthiness of himself before a holy God. He speaks of these things in the last letter that he wrote:

II Timothy 1:9-10

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

These verses, written near the end of his life as the revelation given to Paul came to an end, show us the true attitude of worship. First of all, Paul (the believer) understands that any relationship he has with God is due to the Divine purpose which was even before the creation of the world. Before time began, this relationship was purposed by God and brought to light by the fulfillment of the gospel. The identification of the believer with the finished work of Christ has brought about this relationship. For these reasons alone, we as believers need to truly worship our God! For God, the eternal cause of all that is, has enabled us through unmerited favor to attain immortality through the Gospel. Certainly we should worship God for that!

I have to conclude that in order to properly worship our Lord, we must first understand that He is an eternal and Divine being far greater than we will ever be and “worthy” of our awe, gratitude and honor!

C. Worship of God should be practiced by all believers

It seems odd to say that the worship of God is to be practiced by all believers. I wonder if somehow in all the organization of modern Christianity, the hurry and bustle of Christian service within the world and within local communities, that perhaps the sincere personal worship of a believer towards his God had been lost. Maybe we all have forgotten what true worship is, and maybe the things that we consider to be acts of worship are not really worship at all!

A personal question of mine, and one that I hope you as a fellow believer would consider, is do I really worship the Lord God as I should?

D. True worship will bring us into a closer relationship to God.

The practice of true worship always results in a closer relationship with God.

In the ten commandments of the Old Testament the children of Abraham are commanded to worship Him as The Lord their God. To me, this signifies that God desired a personal and worshipful relationship from them. He was to be The Lord Their God! Throughout the Old Testament are many accounts of how the nation of Israel needed to be told to seek after God as the one and only God, to worship only him and not the gods of the nations. They repeatedly failed in performing this, and as a result the Lord brought judgment upon them, often resulting in their being conquered and carried away by other nations.

In the Old Testament, true worship is often seen in the relationship that existed between God and individuals that were dedicated to Him. In my opinion, there are very few times when the nation of Israel worshipped and remained faithful to their God as a nation. The Old Testament is full of accounts concerning the work of true followers of the Holy One seeking to have their nation return to the worship of their true God!

There are a few accounts of the worship of Jesus as God in the four Gospels; most of them occur following the performance of a miracle or his resurrection, where the man Jesus gave proof of his divinity because death had no hold upon Him. Certainly, in this day of God's Grace we should, as blood-bought children of God, seek to worship our redeemer, our Saviour, our Lord and our Head!

II. True Worship is a personal thing

The truth of progressive revelation, by which I mean the movement of truth through time, is evident in the consideration of the worship of our God. In the present day we no longer have to approach God by the sacrifice of animals. We now may approach God by identification with the completed work of His Son. He gave the Supreme sacrifice, that we through faith, may address God as Father, as children declared perfect through faith. In the days prior to the willing sacrifice of The Son, there had to be a continuing practice of the sacrifice of animals for the sin and sins of men.(Hebrews 9: 24-10:10)

But since the man Jesus offered himself up for our sins, the God, Jesus Christ, sat down on the right hand of almighty God, having completed all sacrifices for sin forevermore. (Hebrews 10: 12-14) The offering of the Son for the believer allows us to worship God without the continual sacrifice and shed blood of innocent animals.

A. Worship within the Old Testament

Remember that worship means to adore a being as more worthy than oneself, to understand that the worthy one is far higher and far greater than we. Understanding this, let us consider the relationship between the first man and his creator.

1) Early worship

In early Genesis we read that Adam walked with God, his creator. In the time prior to the fall of mankind there was not a conflict between man and his creator, Adam as representative of the human race had unbroken fellowship with God. This unbroken fellowship with God allowed a state of worship to exist between Adam and his creator.

Adam understood that God is the creator and that he was the created.

When Adam chose to disobey his creator, he, by the commission of this act, declared God as not worthy of his obedience. It is similar to when a child disobeys his parents (who are in effect his creators). By this disobedience the child declares them as unworthy of his obedience. This creates a conflict between the parent and the child, one that has a penalty and a consequence.

As a result of the disobedience of Adam, he could no longer worship his creator. The human race was plunged into a state of conflict with the creator and had to suffer the penalty of death as a result. (Gen.2:17) The once fertile soil he tilled was to no longer produce its bounty without considerable labor and sweat (Gen: 3 verses17-19).

I believe the penalty of death to Adam as the federal head of the human race was not a physical thing at this time, but one of a spiritual nature. We read in Genesis 5:3-5, that Adam lived a total of 930 years after this conflict with God and as a result of his spiritual death, Adam died physically.

In order for the fellowship with the creator to be restored, there had to be payment made to the creator of an innocent animal. This is first seen, in type, by the death of the animals from which God made the covering of skins for Adam and his wife in Genesis 3:21. By the covering of these skins, made possible by the shed blood of innocent animals, it was possible for man to once again see God as worthy of his adoration. By the blood of the innocent, God could overlook the transgressions of the guilty.

I conclude that one may not truly worship God without a means of atonement and declared sanctification enacted by the creator.

2) Worship at the time of Abraham

In Genesis chapter 22, we have the account of Abraham being told by God to take his son Isaac and go to a certain mountain in the land of Moriah. Here he was to offer up his most prized possession to the Lord, his son in whom everything he hoped for concerning the promises made to him from God rested. There are many things in this chapter concerning the worship of God by Abraham. Some of them are:

verse 5: We see that only Abraham and the promise from God went to the mount to worship. The men on the journey with him were told to wait there while Abraham went alone to the appointed place of sacrifice, or the place where he would declare God worthy of his obedience. His son Isaac is representative of all that he possessed before God. All the promises that he believed God for were tied up in his son; yet he was told to give up all those things in an act of worship before God.

verse 10: We see the result of the action of Abraham. The Lord sees how Abraham places the Lord above everything that he has. Abraham, by his willingness to give up all he had, gave proof that his God was worthy of all his adoration and obedience.

verse 13: Abraham, by laying his hands upon the ram provided by God for sacrifice, identified himself with the provision promised by God in verse 8. By this act, Abraham shows how he as one of lower stature looks to one of a higher stature to provide for him. This in effect is also an act of worship.

3) David's worship of God

In the books of Psalms, King David (the author of many of them) demonstrates many things concerning the true worship and adoration of God by a believer. It is true that David lived in a different era of the revelation of God, yet there are few places in scripture where you will find any clearer or more heartfelt adoring and praise of a man towards his God. In fact the word worship appears more in these books than anywhere else in scripture.

In the Psalms of David we as believers may see how that the true worship of God is a personal thing. It involves the believer and a correct attitude toward God on a far deeper and personal level than many of us understand or even seek after. Although we should!

Psalm 4:3-5 and 5:7

“But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah (think of that!) Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.”

“But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.”

In the Psalms there are many things we can learn concerning a heart of true worship before God. Many of them are found in Psalm 91 through Psalm 100. In these Psalms we find the correct attitude that a believer should have towards his God. In all of them the Lord God is presented as worthy of praise, adoration, and honor by one who has received mercy at the hands of God. I have combined a few of them as an example.

Psalm 92:1, 91:2, 92:13, 95:3, and 100:5

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.
Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.
For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
For the lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”

In all of these, we see the proper attitude of praise and adoration (worship) from our heart towards a Being who is worthy! In both of these examples of Abraham and David, the worship of God was always a personal thing between these men and God. Both were men that believed God, both had a clear understanding of the relationship between God and themselves, and both of them relied upon Him as a giver of mercy and grace.

B. Worship that is desired by God.

In Psalm 51, David, following his sin with Bathsheba, reflects the heart of one who truly worships God. Psalm 51:17+6

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.”

In this Psalm the correct understanding of the relationship man has with God is clearly seen. It is personal; it is of one who understands who God is, and it expresses a desire for mercy from a Being far greater than mortal man.

In John chapter 4 there is the account of the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. During this encounter our Lord speaks to her concerning the true worship that honors God.

John 4:23 and 24 “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

The nation of Israel, even though they possessed unique favor with God, failed to worship Him in spirit. They prided themselves in the practice of worship yet had no longing for a true worshipful heart before God. It was this lack of a correct heart before God that kept them from receiving the promise of God. Christ told them this in a discourse with the spiritual leaders of their nation, in John 8: 39-40:

“They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.”

Even though Israel as a nation could have worshipped God collectively, their heart was far from Him. God desires men to worship Him from their heart, from the very core of their being, far more than the mere practice and formality that they often observe.

III. The things that true worship involves

We as believers may learn many things concerning the worship of our God in the scriptures. I have nowhere near exhausted the subject in this study. I hope to put forth a consideration of the need for us as individual believers to have some kind of personal worship with God. It is an area that, in my own experience, I know little about, and do not practice as I should. I have some things for you to consider that I think are fundamental to the true worship of God.

A. It is to be of the spirit.

Paul tells us in Philippians 3:3 “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

Remember, this letter was written near the end of Paul’s life, when God had revealed all of the things that Paul was to know while on this earth. The complete man had been revealed to him in the letters he had written to the Ephesians and the Colossians. This complete man was the believer who had come to the understanding, by faith, that he had been declared perfect (complete) in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 2:10-13) “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

This complete man had come to the understanding that he was now part of a spiritual realm where worship of God was to be a personal and spiritual matter. I am afraid that many in modern Christendom have lost sight of the fact that the mere formality of worship is a far cry from true worship. As a believer today, I understand that we may all be in this same danger of not worshipping God in a personal and spiritual manner. The complete man has no need of the shadows of worship. His relationship with Christ has given him access to worship God in the manner in which God desires. Col.2:16-17

What the Lord said in John chapter 4:23: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

It is as true today as when it was spoken by the Lord. May we all actively seek to worship God in spirit and in truth. There are two things that anyone who would worship God in the correct manner must understand. They are: God’s relationship to him, and his relationship to God.

B. God’s relationship to us

The beginning of a correct relationship before God begins by despairing of any merits of the flesh.

1) Who we are before God

The complete man has been declared free of all trespasses he has committed against God; his body of sin has been destroyed in the death of Christ. He now stands as free and unencumbered before a holy God, and may worship in spirit and truth. He has no need to hide behind the traditions and formalities of worship, but may worship God in all pureness through Christ Jesus. Col.2: 13-15, 20 Col.3:1

2) Our gratitude and debt

The complete man is to rejoice in Christ Jesus because he is the unholy now declared holy. The Lord has, through His son, declared us to be complete in his sight; we may now approach and worship God in a pure manner. Col. 2:10, 3:10

C. our relationship before God

As believers we understand that we now have access to God, but how do we avail ourselves of it in practice?

1) Study and meditation upon the truth of God

I believe that when we study and meditate upon the truth of God, we are in a way, worshipping Him. What we read and think about becomes part of our nature. If we have no time or no need of putting the truth of God into our daily lives, what value does it have to us?

I have found personally, that I gain much more by the serious thought and consideration of the Word of God than anything else I do as far as the study of His Truth. I consider it part of worship because by study and meditation of the Word it becomes part of my inner thoughts and being. What could be more pleasing to God than for His blood-bought children to seek to know Him?

2) The prayer of the believer

We as believers know that we are to be a prayerful people. We understand that we are to pray for each other and for ourselves. I don't think it would be remiss to say that we all know what we should do, yet few of us do it! We have to remember that our God cares about us and about what goes on within our lives. He has an active interest; so should we! In the Psalms of David we can see what our attitude toward prayer should be. I would say that if we prayed as we should, we would probably be what we should be! Because the prayer life of the believer reflects his relationship with God I think it is part of true worship before God.

3) The praise of our Lord and Saviour

The last part of our relationship to God in worship, is the praise of God just for who He is. We often praise God for what he does in our lives, but how often do we praise him for who he is?

what He has done, some of them are praise for what he will do, and some of them are praise for who he is.

These things reflect the various ways that God relates to us as believers. We should praise Him for the saving of our souls, we should praise him for His care over us, we should praise Him for making us spiritually alive, we should praise him for fellow believers, and we should praise Him for who he is, the creator of life and the author and finisher of our salvation.

Conclusion: The consideration of worship

The reason I felt that I should do this study is because I am not satisfied with the practice of the worship of God in my own life. The more I considered the subject, the more I wondered if we as believers actually worship our God in a way that is pleasing to Him. One thing that I learned in considering the examples of the godly in the Old Testament was that the worship of God is as personal and as private as one can get with the Divine. It must be practiced within our personal relationship with God. It cannot be done by the mere observance of tradition and rituals. This was the practice of the nation of Israel and they were upbraided for it by the Lord. It must be done in truth and in sincerity of spirit. The more I considered these things the more I came to see that when Paul came to understand the secret mystery of the complete man he was indeed telling us as believers to worship God in a completely new way. Our worship springs from the state of a new and complete man declared right in spirit through the accomplished work of Christ Jesus our Lord. Now we are enabled to worship in purity and truth.

I ask you as a fellow believer, do you worship God? Paul, when speaking of his fellow laborer Ep-a-phras, said in Colossians 4:12 that he laboured as Paul did to ensure that they (and we) may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Surely the correct attitude and practice of the worship of God is included in this. I ask you have you considered worship?